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Grime time

I can't be the only one getting fed up with washing my bike, can I? I'll admit to not having done nearly enough riding over the festive period, but even with my minimal ride-count it feels like the hosepipe has had more of a workout than my legs recently.

Even if I perform a minor miracle and avoid the rain, the bike ends up caked in grime. The lanes of Surrey and Sussex are filthy at this time of year, and there's no stopping black liquid flicking up off the road and covering my bike.

And yes, I do have full-length mudguards. They're essential pieces of kit in my world.

The whole dirty situation has resulted in me testing various bike-cleaning techniques. The least effective (unsurprisingly) was leaving my bike out in the rain, while the most effective involved spraying on a cleaning solution, various brushes, the hosepipe, rags and a can of GT85 (you can never have too much of that stuff). As I don't have the time to lavish this care on my old Rourke winter bike after every ride, it's starting to suffer.

It could be worse, however. One member of staff here has two kids who are loving their cyclo-cross at the moment, and are often riding both days at the weekend. As he rides with them he sometimes has three bikes to wash on both a Saturday and a Sunday. And then there's the clothing. That's

a commitment to bike cleaning that I can't match.

Simon Richardson
Editor



Photos: Chris Catchpole, Andrew McCandlish

Past, present and
future Froome, p26



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Head to Scotland for the
King of the Mountains, p56

Vaughters looks to fresh start for 2016

Cannondale team boss lays out gameplan after disastrous year

Gregor Brown

Inexperienced riders, a lack of team leaders and problems behind the scenes led to Cannondale-Garmin's disappointing 2015 season, according to a letter from team manager Jonathan Vaughters published last week.

The UCI WorldTour team won just 11 times last season — including two National Championships victories — as the squad formed out of the merger between the American Garmin-Sharp and Italian Cannondale set-ups made an inauspicious start.

General manager Vaughters admitted to some of the team's problems in a 725-word letter that forms the only accessible page of the team's website at the time of going to press.

"While 2015 brought many challenges for such a young team and two diverse organisations, 2016 will be the fruit of our time in the trenches last year," he wrote.

Eight of Cannondale's riders joined Vaughters's team in the merger, including former world under-23 road race champion Matej Mohoric (then aged 20), while experienced Garmin riders David Millar and Koldo Fernandez retired, and 30-somethings Tyler Farrar, Thomas Dekker, Nick Nuyens, Johan Vansummeren and Fabian Wegmann left.

The team's average age of 26.4

was the lowest of the 17 WorldTour squads. Sky, in comparison, had an average three years older at 29.4.

"It wasn't [the merger that was the problem], we had younger guys, talent, who needed guidance," Vaughters told *Cycling Weekly*. "That needed to change."

Mohoric, now at Lampre, agreed, telling *CW*: "They [the young riders] didn't suffer from the merger. I didn't see any problems."

"The fact that the results didn't come in was due to the other reasons. Big hitters like [Peter] Sagan didn't come over to the team. Some good Garmin riders like Millar retired, and riders like Dan Martin had a huge amount of bad luck."

"It's a young team that needs time, it's a long-term project," Mohoric added. "That's the team's philosophy: not buying star riders with big money but investing time in young riders and their development."

Youth and inexperience

In Vaughters's letter, the American details how he believes that the signings of Giro and Vuelta stage winner Simon Clarke (29) and former Tinkoff-Saxo rider Matti Breschel (31) will "guide our young talents in the direction we need to help them become winners".

Furthermore, he hopes that the additions of former Sky rider Rigoberto Urán and Frenchman Pierre Rolland will give the team's stage race attack greater potency.

"Rigo is a consummate professional, and Rolland is a greatly underestimated talent in the world of cycling," Vaughters wrote.

Reports have suggested there was infighting among team leaders and backroom staff throughout the season, while some insiders say that Vaughters could be more hands-on with running the team. After last year's poor Tour de France, he wrote on Twitter: "Selfishly, I'd like to disappear, but that hurts quite a few good people. Therefore, Slipstream's owners (me too) have decided to push forward."

Any lack of involvement and direction is something both Mohoric and DS Fabrizio Guidi both refute. "He was around at the races, as much as Roberto Amadio would be at Cannondale," said the former of his 2015 experience.

Guidi added: "JV gives us all faith and puts more responsibility on my shoulders. I like that."


MY VIEW...

Sophie Hurcom

Cycling Weekly news writer

"The signings of Rigoberto Urán and Pierre Rolland should give the squad some much needed firepower when it comes to the Grand Tours this year. Both are capable of getting a top-10 overall or a stage win at the Tour, which, with Dan Martin now gone, is something they desperately need in order to not repeat the disaster of 2015."





The will was there,
but Cannondale
had a woeful 2015

Argyle army says so long to Garmin

Cannondale's eye-catching argyle green kit for 2016 was finally made public last week, with one thing missing: Garmin's distinctive logos.

The American technology company's sponsorship deal ran until the end of last year but, unlike other UCI WorldTour team backers such as Belkin, Saxo Bank, Liquigas and Argos, its departure from the sport was not announced. When contacted, the company gave no reason for the non-renewal.

"It wasn't a surprise to see Garmin leave," said team manager Jonathan Vaughters. "They are going through some difficulties. You have to remember that when they joined our team eight years ago, they were primarily in the sat-nav business. Now with smartphones, that business is shrinking. Cannondale is in it for the long term, though. We are under no pressure."

Even so, the team's former underdog status seems to be re-emerging. If Vaughters had to make do with little before — winning races like the Giro d'Italia with Ryder Hesjedal and placing fourth in the Tour de France with Bradley Wiggins — then he will now have to do with less again.

Irish talisman Dan Martin left for Etixx-Quick Step this winter, while Hesjedal headed to Trek after a nine-season spell with the team that saw him win the 2012 Giro.

"Unless General Motors or Google comes along and gives us a budget of BMC or Sky then it [the team's standing] is not going to change," Vaughters said. "We have about one-third of their budgets."

"We are the smallest budget team in the WorldTour. But our budget wasn't bigger when we won the Giro with Ryder a couple of years ago."

Defiant Tiernan-Locke returns to racing

Former Sky and Endura man back after doping ban

Nick Bull

Fresh from confirming a February date for his racing comeback, Jon Tiernan-Locke says he is not worried about the reaction he'll get upon his return to the sport.

The 31-year-old last week announced he will compete in the National B-ranked Primavera Road Race in his native Devon on February 28, his first competitive outing since receiving a two-year doping ban.

Tiernan-Locke will race either as an elite or first-cat (subject to confirmation from British Cycling), with further details of his new, local team scheduled to be announced in the coming weeks.

"I've not dwelled on what reaction I'll get," he told *Cycling Weekly*. "I probably won't get a warm welcome from everybody, I understand that, but I'm not worried about it.

"Some of the best riders in the UK have sent me a few messages of support, saying they're looking forward to seeing me back racing, which is nice."

Passport anomalies

Tiernan-Locke's last competitive outing was in Team Sky colours at the GP Montréal on September 15, 2013. He was suspended two weeks later by the UCI for biological passport anomalies dating back to the previous year's Tour of Britain, which he won while riding for Endura. It then issued a backdated 24-month ban the following July that ended on New Year's Eve 2015.

He has always maintained his innocence, putting the anomalies down to a drinking binge and subsequent dehydration. He spent nearly a year off the bike after being banned. Nonetheless, he has been in training again for the past few months, and even opted to break a long-standing preference of not using power meters to assist in his preparations.

"I'm going really well," Tiernan-Locke added. "I just feel good on the bike all the time now. I train when I'm fresh, I'm not doing stupid hours, I'm being sensible and looking after myself.

Changing ambitions

"I was a bit reluctant to use a power meter as I like riding around and not being a slave to numbers. But I thought if I'm going to be serious about racing, whether I'm coming back for fun or to race well, I wanted to get the most out of my training time. So I got one, and it's really motivated me to push myself."

Tiernan-Locke is hopeful of competing in rounds of BC's Elite Road Series, particularly the Chorley GP, Tour of the Reservoir and the Lincoln GP events, which should suit his punchy style.

"I'll start the year with a few low-key races and from there I'll see how it goes," he added. "Even if I get into half the series' races, I'm hopeful of getting some good results.

"I'm committed to racing this year. I'm going to race when I can, and not do it just for the sake of it. I'll see how it goes and if the results come in, my ambitions may change."



**JTL is under no illusions
about his return to racing**

What reception will JTL receive?

Jon Tiernan-Locke will face no prejudice when it comes to having race entries accepted, organisers have told *Cycling Weekly*.

Ken Robertson, organiser of the Mid-Devon CC Primavera Road Race in which Tiernan-Locke wants to begin his comeback, said: "Jon is an honorary member of the Mid-Devon CC and has remained so during the whole unfortunate episode.

"I would expect no adverse reaction from the members. I was with a top South-West rider during the week and he was looking forward to locking horns with him and seeing who was going to come out on top. He also said that he knew of several others who relished the challenge.

"At a personal level I will have no issue in accepting his entry — why should I?"

Carl Lawrenson, organiser of the Chorley GP (this year's first Elite Road Series event), added: "As Jon will have completed his suspension his entry will be judged on the same basis as everyone else when selecting the field, assuming we are oversubscribed as we were last year."

Lawrenson's stance was echoed by Mike Hodgson, who puts on the Tour of the Reservoir two-day. "I have no problem with him entering the race whatsoever. As always, any entries will be considered in order of elite category riders, then first cats, then second cats."

MY VIEW...



Nick Bull

Cycling Weekly news writer

Jon Tiernan-Locke knows not everybody will be happy to see him back racing. But behind this acceptance there is clearly a desire to make this comeback a success — he sounded as motivated and enthusiastic as I've ever heard him.

Photo: Jesse Wild

Williamson fighting back

Team GB track starlet recovering after serious Dutch crash

Sophie Hurcom

British sprinter Vicky Williamson is showing signs of recovery following a “horrific” crash at the Rotterdam Six-Day last weekend that left her with fractures to her pelvis and vertebrae.

The 22-year-old came down in a collision with Dutch rider Elis Ligtlee during a sprint heat in the Netherlands on Saturday. Such was the seriousness of the crash — said to be caused after the duo locked handlebars — Williamson was knocked unconscious and organisers called off the rest of the day’s racing. The injuries are likely to rule her out of contention for a place in the GB team for this summer’s Rio Olympics.

“From all accounts it was a reasonably horrific experience to watch. Bad accidents do happen from time to time,” said British Cycling sprint coach Justin Grace.

“They were racing in a match sprint — that’s always nice, close racing and the girls are going close to 70 kilometres an hour at their Olympic speeds,” he continued.

Williamson underwent surgery in hospital in Rotterdam on Sunday and was due to have another operation on Tuesday. Grace was hopeful that if all went well she could be moved to a hospital in Manchester this Friday.

“Some of her injuries have started to show signs of healing so that’s been a real positive for the doctors,” he said. However, Grace stressed it was too early to know what recovery she was facing: “Her recovery for us is about getting her rehabilitated to be able to move around and live a normal life, and what comes out on top of that is secondary.”

Elsewhere, GB endurance rider Katie Archibald last week revealed she ruptured a ligament in her knee and fractured her elbow in a crash a month ago.



Williamson: injured at Rotterdam Six

Weekly column
Rob Hayles



“As we exited Aladdin’s cave, who was there waiting to collect his bike? Mr Cavendish himself”

I spent a few hours the other day giving a guided tour of the National Cycling Centre in Manchester. We split the assembled group into two, and while one half was given an hour’s session on the velodrome, the other half were taken around the rest of the building.

We started with the BMX track, and from there, we moved down into the bowels of the track, along the tight corridor past the gym, then in through a door into the storeroom. If you’re into bikes, then this will be your cycling Mecca. The sheer quantity of kit behind that door never fails to amaze me, and the number of medals won using the equipment and clothing stored inside beggars belief.

But if all this wasn’t enough to wow the group being shown around, then what was in the corridor awaiting them certainly did. You see, as we exited Aladdin’s cave, who was there waiting to come in to collect his bike? It was none other than Mr Cavendish himself. The looks on the group members’ faces were a picture and, for a lucky few, a picture is what they got (although I think the term used these days is a selfie).

Next to come through was former world BMX champion Liam Phillips. He was in for physio after another big crash, but was all smiles for the crowd that was gathered. But then, before they had time to draw breath, another door opened and Wiggo strolled through. Well that was it; screams of delight were heard throughout the facility.

Now, being star-struck is something I find a little strange. I suppose I know these guys so that’s different. But then, I once had dinner with ‘the Cannibal’ himself, Mr Eddy Merckx, without once tripping over my words or coming out with some daft comment that earned a look of disdain from the great man. Maybe I’m just too cool for school?

But then again, while walking out from the Sydney 2000 closing ceremony, I almost bumped into Kylie Minogue as she came out of her dressing room after performing on stage. I was in shock, and I may even have wet myself a little. But it was a very long time ago, and I’ve matured a lot since then. Although I have to say it’s a shame I never found the courage to introduce myself. Ha! She should be so lucky... lucky, lucky, lucky!

Former double world track champion, Rob Hayles is a pundit for TV and radio. He’s also a coffee connoisseur and garden shed inventor

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Bobridge's escape to victory

Aussie title-winning ride hints at end to recent troubles

Chris Marshall-Bell

Jack Bobridge defied the odds to take a masterful win at the Australian Road Race Championships on Sunday in Buninyong, Victoria.

Up against the might of his former Orica-GreenEdge team, who fielded nine riders in the event, and in 33-degree

heat, the Trek-Segafredo rider and 2011 champion rode solo for more than 90 kilometres to take an unfancied victory.

Part of a strong 21-rider break that formed on the opening lap, 26-year-old Bobridge initially broke clear of the field with Bernie Sulzberger (Drapac) before riding solo for just under half the total race distance.

"That was my greatest ever ride," he said. "I think 90km or 100km solo is the next level [of performance], I guess."

The result suggests a return to form for individual pursuit world record holder Bobridge, who struggled at Orica in 2012, before two lean years at Belkin were followed by last season's move to the third-tier Budget Forklifts team

aimed at offering a home to Australian track riders. He was infamously banned for drink-driving six weeks before the London Olympics.

Orica paid for not chasing early enough: when Bobridge went solo, the peloton trailed him by nine minutes. Simon Gerrans ended up the team's only finisher in sixth; only 15 riders completed the race.





Jack Bobridge took a stunning solo win at the Australian Nationals

Cameron Meyer (Dimension Data) trailed in second place, 2-52 behind, after a late attack, with Patrick Lane (Avanti IsoWheySports) rounding off the podium.

BMC dominated the men's time trial championships on Thursday, as former World Hour Record holder Rohan Dennis won ahead of new team-mate Richie Porte.

Dennis averaged 51.1kph on the undulating 40.9km Buninyong course, to finish 38 seconds ahead of Porte.

Amanda Spratt led a one-three-four finish for Orica in the road race, beating Ruth Corset in a two-way sprint. Rachel Neylan completed the podium, ahead of team-mate Katrin Garfoot, who won the women's time trial.

Guest column Matt Prior



“This team, somewhere, is going to turn a few heads. Hopefully I’ll be there when it happens”

I genuinely believe One Pro Cycling can do something special next year: I don’t know what that is, or when it’s going to happen, but I just have a good feeling in my bones.

With races coming up in New Zealand, Australia and Dubai in the coming months, it’s going to be an exciting start to One Pro Cycling’s first season at UCI Professional Continental level. The team already feels like a different animal to this time last year: more riders and staff, new technical partners (including new bike supplier, Factor Bikes) and bigger goals. We had a training camp in Spain just before Christmas, and it was great to know that everybody is fully committed to the aim of being the best we can be.

We’ll have teams at the New Zealand Cycle Classic [January 20-24], the Cadel Evans Road Race [January 31] and the Dubai Tour [February 3-6]. There are 11 WorldTour teams racing in the latter: not only does this show how far we’ve come in such a short space of time, but also the level of race we’re aiming to compete in throughout 2016.

Confident of success

There’s a lot of excitement among all the riders including the likes of Yanto Barker, Chris Opie and Pete Williams: they’ve raced for years on the British domestic scene, and now they’re going to be riding big events around the world. For a lot of them, it’s a dream come true. I can tell their motivation is high; it’s difficult to not be grabbed by it. And I think, to a man, they all know that we don’t just want to turn up to races and make up the numbers, we are here to compete!

One of the most exciting things about our 2016 team is that we’ve got 20 riders who could surprise people. There are a number of guys whose potential is huge. As per last year, we’re not going to rely on one or two riders to do well. This team, somewhere, is going to turn a few heads. Hopefully I’ll be there when it happens. I’ll be going to as many races as I need to but we’ve got a very good staff and management team in place who are more than capable of overseeing things and making sure everything runs as smoothly and professionally as we would want.

Former England cricketer Matt Prior is co-owner and chief executive of Professional Continental team One Pro Cycling

Liggett awarded Bidlake Memorial Prize

Phil Liggett is to be awarded the 2015 FT Bidlake Memorial Prize for his contribution to cycling. The 72-year-old, who said he was “absolutely chuffed” to get the prize, has a career spanning 50 years in the sport. He plans to broadcast from his 44th consecutive Tour de France this summer. “I haven’t missed a day on the Tour since 1979. At my age I should know better, but I don’t,” he said. Named after the father of time trialling, Frederick Thomas Bidlake, the award is one of the oldest and most prestigious in British cycle sport. Past recipients include Tom Simpson, Chris Boardman and Sir Dave Brailsford.

Dumoulin aiming for Giro TT success

Giant-Alpecin’s Tom Dumoulin says he is targeting the time trials and not the overall victory at the Giro d’Italia, after announcing his planned participation in the year’s first Grand Tour. The race starts in the 25-year-old Dutchman’s home country with an 8.1km prologue around Apeldoorn, and includes a mountain time trial on stage 15. Dumoulin said: “It’s a beautiful course for me.”

Sun Sport Velo launched in North-West

A new women’s development team has been set up in the North-West that will compete in the Women’s Road Series. Sun Sport Velo, a partnership between Sun Sport Coaching and Velo Espresso, has thus far recruited five riders, including 2015 national under-16 cyclo-cross champion Sophie Thackray. The team, managed by Tony Orrell, also has plans to race in Belgium, the Netherlands and Ireland.

Tony Brazier dies

Tony Brazier, a member of Verulam CC for 66 years, has died aged 81 after a period of illness. Brazier was an esteemed local time triallist but his greatest result came on the road, when he shocked a field of Olympians to win the 1953 Coronation Road Race in Welwyn Garden City.

Doping ban for Boogerd

Former Rabobank rider Michael Boogerd was last week handed a two-year suspension relating to historical doping offences. The two-time Tour de France stage winner, who previously admitted use of substances, including EPO, between 1997 and 2007, was stripped of results from 2005 to 2007. The ban prevents Boogerd from continuing as a sports director at the Dutch Roompot Orange Peloton team.



Boogerd's tainted past has caught up with him



Canyon delays cause customer frustration

Productions problems at direct sales brand lead to lengthy waits

Sophie Hurcom & Henry Robertshaw

Thousands of Canyon customers have been left frustrated and without their new bikes following production problems, the company admitted last week.

The Koblenz-based manufacturer told *CW* that up to 2,000 customers have been affected by the hold-up, which has left some people still waiting to receive bikes they purchased five months ago.

“We’ve migrated our software and opened a new factory at the same time, and it has caused some delays in production,” explained Nick Allen, marketing manager at Canyon UK.

“We’re communicating as best we can to make sure people are fully up to date.”

However, many customers have taken to social media to express their anger, with a Twitter account called @canyon_delays set up to highlight the issue.

One customer, who spoke to *CW*, is still waiting for a £2,000 Endurance 9.0 CF bike ordered last summer. Full payment has been made, but advised delivery dates of October, then December, were not met. “I didn’t get an email, didn’t get anything from them,” they said. Since then, the customer has received mixed messages of both January and April for when to expect the bike. “I’m still not sure when I’m going to get it. They’ve let us down.”

Another told *CW*: “I ordered a bike from them in December. It was in stock, but they are not able to tell me when I’ll receive it other than in ‘due course’. This is not the service consumers expect from such a reputable brand.”

Frank Aldorf, brand manager at Canyon, stressed the situation is being rectified: “Everyone at Canyon feels the pain, and we realise behind every order is a rider who wants his or her new bike. We hope to be out of this problem in the next four to six weeks.”

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Martin: new team, new dreams

Irish star to get GC support for 2016 campaign

Stuart Clarke in Calpe

The best is yet to come in Dan Martin's career, according to the man himself. Despite having two Monuments and a Vuelta a España top 10 to his name, the former Cannondale-Garmin rider says he is looking to fill in the gaps in his palmarès

in his new venture with Etixx-Quick Step, who he joined for 2016 after nine seasons with his previous team.

Martin admits that it would have been "easier to stay" at Cannondale this season.

Cycling's super-team

However, he told *Cycling Weekly* that

he felt the best way to add to his Liège-Bastogne-Liège and Il Lombardia titles was to move to another team: one that's made him feel immediately at home.

"The welcome I received [at Etixx] immediately was fantastic," Martin said at the team's training camp in Calpe, Spain last week. "The guys said to me before it's a big family and that's true.

"From the outside it's a super-team — it's the Real Madrid of cycling — but when you get in there everyone feels such a part of the unit. There's an understanding that everyone is a critical part in a successful cycling team."

His move to the Belgian team wasn't unexpected. Each time his contract expired at Garmin, Etixx manager Patrick Lefevere expressed his interest, Martin revealed, and the opportunity to work for the 61-year-old was one of the main factors in him joining the team.



Martin added: "It would have been a lot easier for me to stay [at Cannondale] — I knew all the staff, I knew how it worked, but I wanted to experience a new environment to see how far I can go."

Referencing his high-profile crashes during Liège and the Giro in 2014, and his race-ending fall at last year's Vuelta, he added: "There wasn't one thing that prompted me to leave, it was the build-up of a few things — the bad luck I experienced, for example."

Valverde-lite

Martin will also work with experienced sports director Brian Holm, who nurtured Mark Cavendish into a 26-time Tour de France stage winner, although the Dane compared Martin to another prolific rider.

"He's the kind of rider we like because

he's always good from February until October — a light version of [Alejandro] Valverde. He wins races, he can do the Classics, he can sprint, he will survive the crosswinds — he's a bloody good cyclist," Holm said.

While Martin wants, and is expected, to perform in the Ardennes this spring, Lefevere says he sees the Irishman filling the shoes of the departed Rigoberto Urán by leading the team's general classification charge in the Grand Tours.

"It's a complement from Patrick,"

Martin said. "It tells a small story about where he thinks I'm heading [in my career]. I've never ruled out Grand Tours but I've never had the success that my potential perhaps could achieve.

"I'm not going to think too much of what is expected of me or what I want to achieve, it's more just a case of having fun again."

Etixx's Colombian express

Famed for his work with Mark Cavendish, Etixx-Quick Step sports director Brian Holm believes Colombian Fernando Gaviria could soon be the best sprinter in the peloton.

"He's going to be the next big thing in cycling, I've never seen anything like it. He's always impressing me with the things he does, he's got something special," Holm said of the 21-year-old.

Despite Cavendish's departure from Etixx this winter, his and Gaviria's careers remain inextricably linked. The latter is about to embark on his first full season with Etixx, debuting at the Tour de San Luis, which starts on Monday [January 18] — the race where he made his name last season by beating the Manxman twice in the space of three stages.

After Gaviria joined Etixx mid-season, the pair rode together at the Tour of Britain, where the Colombian brilliantly won the bunch sprint into Blyth.

However, they could face off again at the Rio Olympics: Gaviria goes into the omnium, the event Cavendish wants to finally win a gold medal in, as a favourite, having won the world title in the discipline in 2015.

"We saw him kicking the s**t out of Cav last year [in San Luis]. OK, he had been training a lot and Cav was coming from the winter break, but even [later in the season] we saw him riding at the front and pulling for Cav," Holm added.

New signing Marcel Kittel will enjoy a dedicated sprint train at Etixx, but who will Gaviria work with?

"He can go on his own for a while," Holm said. "He'll win anyway."



Etixx training
in Calpe

Photo: Tim De Waele

Killeen wins National Cross Champs

Determination pays off at last for podium stalwart

Eleven years after his first podium finish in the event, Liam Killeen finally took his maiden victory in the British Cyclo-Cross Championships in a muddy Shrewsbury on Sunday.

Killeen, who has finished second in the event five times (2005, 2006, 2008, 2012 and 2015), opened a gap on defending champion Ian Field (Hargroves Cycles) in the race's final 20 minutes and won by 44 seconds.

"I'm really pleased as it has been a long time coming," said the Specialized Racing rider. "I was thinking back to Abergavenny in 2005, when Nick Craig and myself were fighting in similar sort of conditions. It doesn't feel like 11 years ago!"

Best known for his mountain biking exploits — he was Commonwealth champion in 2008, and placed fifth in the Beijing Olympics — the 33-year-old from Malvern has been hindered in recent years after breaking his ankle in the discipline at London 2012.

It still gives him discomfort during competition: "Field is a class cross rider and I was a bit apprehensive because of the amount of running," Killeen added. "But it all worked out. The race kind of naturally selected and I just rode to the finish once a gap opened up."

Only a late mechanical problem stopped Helen Wyman from winning her 10th title in 11 years: Boels-Dolmans rider Nikki Harris overtook her late on to claim her second win in the event.

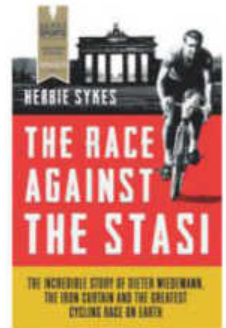
■ See page 68 for a full race report



To do this week...

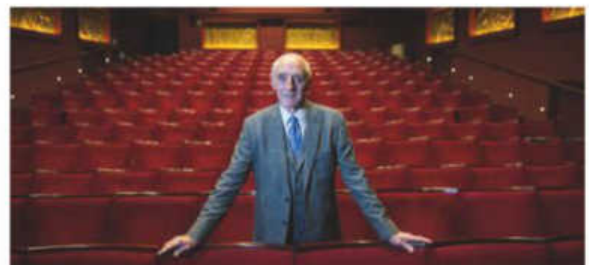
Read *The Race Against The Stasi* by Herbie Sykes

The newly-released paperback version of this highly acclaimed book tells the astonishing tale of East German cyclist Dieter Wiedemann, a Peace Race podium finisher, who was selected to ride for West Germany in an Olympic qualifier at the height of the Cold War. www.aurumpress.co.uk £9.99.



Get Cycling Film Trio tickets, Regent Street Cinema, London, Sunday January 31

London's oldest cinema will screen *A Notebook from the Tour de France* and *On Yer Bike* films back-to-back, before airing the popular *Alf Engers: The King*, at the end of the month. Ray Pascoe, director of *Notebook*, will also host a Q&A. HQ: Regent Street Cinema, London. 2pm; Tickets: £11, £15. po.st/Cyclingfilmtrio



Ride Velo Schils Interbike Sportive, Colchester, Sunday January 17

The Essex bike shop hosts its annual season-opener sportive, comprising a 50km Mini Sportivo and 74km Gran Sportivo routes through the local countryside. "It can get quite hard — towards the end there are three or four little climbs," said organiser Dominic Schils. HQ: Interbike, Colchester, Essex. 10.30am. po.st/InterbikeSportive

Watch National Trophy Round Six, Milton Keynes Bowl, Sunday January 17

A handful of titles will be decided at the final race of this winter's series, while elite men's champion Ian Field looks to complete a clean sweep of round victories. HQ: Milton Keynes Bowl, Milton Keynes. 10.15am. po.st/MKnationaltrophy

Tell us about your event at cycling@timeinc.com

Sutton backs Cav's three-pronged attack

Manxman targets Olympics, Tour and Worlds

Nick Bull in Manchester

Mark Cavendish's dreams of winning Olympic omnium gold, the World Championships road race and wearing the yellow jersey at the Tour de France in 2016 are all possible, according to British Cycling technical director Shane Sutton.

Cavendish's ambitious hat-trick starts on July 2, when he wants to win the opening Tour de France stage, which finishes at Utah Beach, Normandy, and claim the first maillot jaune on offer. The Olympic omnium in Rio takes place over two days in mid-August, before the Qatari city of Doha hosts a likely wind-affected Worlds road race on October 16.

"With great riders, it's about pushing the boundaries with them to keep getting the best out of them," Sutton told *Cycling Weekly*. "Mark said to me it [his recent track training programme at Manchester] is the hardest thing he's done in his life, but I believe he can meet all three of his objectives.

"I think he's really enjoying riding his

bike. That may have been suppressed of late, and I think we're seeing the real Cav again."

The Tour's maillot jaune is the only Grand Tour leader's jersey Cavendish has yet to wear in his career. His failure to win an Olympic medal is well-documented, while he believes a second World title on the road would be "something quite tremendous."

Before then, Cavendish needs to perform well in this weekend's round of the UCI Track World Cup in Hong Kong — he is only scheduled to ride the omnium — and also at the Track World Championships in London in early March to earn selection for the Olympics.

Nonetheless, Sutton believes Cavendish's recent power-focused training programme at the Manchester Velodrome will serve him well, regardless of how many of his targets he meets.

"The work on the programme will give him the sustainable speed in going forward," Sutton said. "Look at the last couple of years; it's the last 20 metres or so that have let him down, speed-wise."

MY VIEW...

Nick Bull

Cycling Weekly news writer

Mark Cavendish has already described his 2016 season as "full on". Should all go to plan, it could be career-defining.

His hunger for Olympic gold cannot be doubted. Cavendish's dislike of being asked about his failure to win a medal in the Madison at the Beijing Games eight years ago still goes deep, arguably now more than ever. It could be what motivates him to triumph in Brazil — and before then, earning Britain's one spot in the event, ahead of nearest challenger Jon Dibben.

The road Worlds is different from the other two targets in that Cavendish has previously

triumphed in the event.

Nonetheless, another bid for glory makes sense, given the sprint-friendly course. His biggest challenge could actually be having team-mates fit in mid-October.

This is a very different challenge to virtually every one of his previous seasons as a professional. The dual road/track focus means Cavendish will do well to get anywhere near his recent year-end totals for road wins (14 in 2015, 19 in 2013). His relative lack of base miles this winter means that he may struggle in early-season road races, too.

Then again, his winter track training could make him unbeatable come the summer.





Godwin's record finally tumbles

American veteran posts new annual distance record

Trevor Ward

US rider Kurt Searvogel set a new annual mileage record of 76,076 last week, surpassing Brit Tommy Godwin's 76-year-old record by 1,001 miles. **CW** spoke to him, firstly about his use of a recumbent.

CW: For part of the attempt you rode a recumbent, which didn't go down too well with some of Godwin's fans. Can you explain?

KS: Hey, a recumbent's still a bicycle, it's just that the pedals are in front of you! I only rode it part of the time, mainly in Florida where it's flat and windy so a recumbent's the right tool for the job. Also, I had to think about my nether regions. When I did the Race Across America, I still had saddle sores after three weeks. I needed to be able to change positions and my weight distribution, and that's why I went for a recumbent. It was within the rules.

CW: You also had the latest technology, accurate weather forecasts and carbon bikes, whereas Godwin had none of those things. Is the comparison fair?

KS: My advantages were the technology I had. But Tommy had the advantages of a full support team, sponsors and being half my age [27, Searvogel's 52]. These things are major trade-offs with my technology. But if I'd had to do it in England, I wouldn't have broken the record, there's no way in hell I'd be riding in the cold. I know that will make Tommy's fans happy!

CW: How did you hear of the record?

KS: I'd just broken my club's year record [23,000 miles for Big Dogs Ultra Cycling] and someone said to me, 'Hey dude, here's the real number, it's 75,000 miles by this British guy'. That was 2012, but there was no one who would certify a record attempt until

the UMCA [Ultra Marathon Cycling Association] set up some rules in late 2014. As soon as I saw they were doable, I decided to do it.

CW: You averaged 200 miles and 12 hours on the bike every day. What was your daily diet?

KS: I had a microwave breakfast pack — sausage, eggs, potatoes — and then I'd have cereals — anything sugary — from the complimentary hotel breakfast. After about 30 or 40 miles I'd have a second breakfast, a sausage or bacon and egg wrap. After another 50 miles, I'd have my first lunch — a sub sandwich depending what Alicia [his wife and support crew member] could find — and then a few hours later a second lunch with a good portion of junk food, such as candy bars or Pop Tarts. For supper I'd have burgers, pizza or burritos with three or four beers.

CW: Did you ever come close to quitting?

KS: We had a big hurricane come up through Mexico and it dumped rain for five days. It wasn't warm rain, it was cold. By the end of those five days I was ready to say, 'Forget it, I'm done'. Another time, I was on the recumbent and suddenly found I couldn't breathe any more. Alicia rushed me to emergency, they did some tests and said, 'Oh, you have asthma'. I'd never had it before. I had to change my position on the recumbent after that.

CW: Does Steve Abraham, who is currently challenging the record in the UK, have a chance?

KS: If he doesn't get out of England, no. If he'd had a different plan for the winter, he'd have definitely had a chance.

CW: Finally, how are you walking after all this riding?

KS: Fine. I've been to the beach and doing some sightseeing [in St Augustine] today. There have been no problems.

THE BIG QUESTION

“What would be your perfect opening three stages of the Tour de France?”

Stage one: along the Belgian coastline for crosswinds, giving the sprinters a chance to win, but with tough racing. A stage in Flanders finishing on the Muur and then a stage in the Ardennes.

Jack Beavis

Stage one: Inverness to Perth through the Cairngorms. Stage two: Glasgow to Edinburgh through southern uplands and Scottish borders. Stage three: individual time trial in Fife. Winner is the first one not to get his wheels nicked.

David Findlay

Yorkshire Dales, Snowdonia and the Isle of Wight.

Margaret Potter

Stage one (prologue): Alpe d'Huez. Stage two: team time trial via the Col du Galibier. Stage three: individual time trial via Mont Ventoux. That then gets all the time trials out of the way and allows attacks on the other stages. And they should get rid of radios!

Tony Barnsley

Past my house, past my house, past my house!

Noel Slack

Stage one: Land's End to Exeter, stunning scenery with virtually no flat. Stage two: Salisbury to Windsor, finish by the castle, or Legoland. Stage three: time trial through the Channel Tunnel.

Paul Fletcher

Stage one: individual time trial in the form of a commute from Kingston to St Paul's via Tooting and Balham. Stage two: ride around the Surrey Hills, via every coffee stop/place that sells beer. Stage three: to take place on a Friday night or a Monday morning with a longest-lap-style race into London.

Gary Lee



A perfect opening trio should offer something for everyone

Stage one: an East Anglian stage taking in some coastal roads and likely some strong crosswinds too. Stage two: city centre individual time trial around Birmingham. Stage three: taking in every mountain pass possible through the Peak District with the pass by Mam Tor featuring twice, the second time as a finish.

Becky Trower

In France. An opening stage starting at Mont Saint Michel and travelling to Utah Beach; a tough second stage from Saint L   to Cherbourg; then a flat stage three from Granville to Angers for the sprinters. No chance of ever seeing that happen... is there?

Ben Rogers

You can't beat a good team time trial to kick off the Tour, followed by a flat stage for the sprinters (with a finish time bonus) and then a second road stage with a hilly finish to cater for the puncheurs. It's the magic formula to see the yellow jersey change hands — spread the love and all that.

Michael Rawnsley

Next week's big question...

Who would be your ideal cycling partner, and why?

Reply to us at cycling@timeinc.com or at www.facebook.com/CyclingWeekly

Letters

Letter of the week
wins a Lazer O2
helmet worth £69.99



Great Scot!

STAR
LETTER

I must say the Flying Scot feature (CW, Dec 17) was really brilliant. Trevor Ward is to be warmly congratulated on his great piece on the revered marque.

I'm positive it will create quite a storm up here in Scotland and a lot of folk will be visiting their attics and sheds to have a look at any old bikes that may be languishing in the dust!

Robert Braid, email

Here's to you, Mr Robinson

Des Robinson was one of the major figures in mass-start racing under the rules of the NCU during the mid-40s through to the mid-50s, when he joined the BLRC.

In his early career he won the 1949 Manx International, and represented Great Britain in two World Championships and the 1952 Olympics.

He was also a member of the GB team in the Route de France and influenced the career of his younger brother Brian, who won two stages in the Tour.

Brian attributes his early training years to the fact that as a 15-year-old rider he was training with GB international riders — Des, Gordon 'Tiny' Thomas, Jack Fancourt and Jack Holmes.

Des retired at the age of 26 because of the opposition to road racing by the RTTC and the NCU.

He became a local coach and was a great influence upon riders such as Albert Hitchin, Lisa Brambani and Paul Dixon.

He will be sorely missed.

*H. Derek Browne,
The Bygone Bykes (Yorkshire) Club*

Scotch missed...

In the Flying Scot article (CW, Dec 17) you state: "Victor Polanski, a member of Dundee Wheelers who dominated the Highland Games grass-track championships during the 60s, 70s and 80s."

That's not quite how I remember it. John Hardie of Dunshalt between 1976 and 1992 won 65 titles and in 1982 won all eight titles from 800 to 8,000 metres.

I hope this clarifies who was the real 'King of the Grass Games' in that era.

Ed Hood, email

Change of heart

For many years I was opposed to the adulation of Tom Simpson but your article (CW, Dec 17) has changed my opinion. We now know that virtually every rider in the pro ranks was 'doing stuff', so in effect Tom was on a level playing field.

I was impressed by the comments of local Essex hero Vin Denson. I think that Vin knew as much as anyone about Tom's motivation and it is true that when Tom died, Vin was heartbroken — he was

the one who cautioned Tom to "take it easy". That surely is the whole point.

There are people in all walks of life who simply must win at all costs. Even coming second is seen as failure.

I am so pleased that Vin Denson is still with us. To me he is still a lamplighter to the glory that has become British cycling — we are now the world-beaters and will be on top for a further decade.

Norman Bright, email

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Johnny Helms was *Cycling Weekly's* resident cartoonist from February 1946 until November 2009.

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26,273 abc

Cycling Weekly ABC, Jan-Dec, 2014 (print & digital)

Subscriptions hotline (0844) 848 0848

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES (for 51 issues, including postage)

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World £251.79 Send orders and correspondence to:

Oakfield House, 35 Perryman Road, Haywards Heath,

West Sussex RH16 3DH. Cheques payable to Time Inc (UK) Ltd.

BACK ISSUES:

John Denton Services, Unit 6, Viking Trade Park, Newark Road, Peterborough, PE1 5EE

Tel: 01733 688 964, www.mags-uk.com/Publisher/TimeInc

Cycling Weekly, 0011-4316, is published weekly by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd.

Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU, England

The 2015 US annual subscription price is \$384.20. Airfreight and mailing in

the USA by agent named Air Business Ltd, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15,

146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA.

Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431.

US Postmaster: Send address changes to Cycling Weekly, Air Business Ltd, c/o

Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA

Subscription records are maintained at Time Inc. Blue Fin Building, 110

Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU, England

Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

Registered at the Post Office as a newspaper. Printed in the UK by the Polestar Group. Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd., a Time Inc. (UK) Ltd company, 2nd floor, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London E14 5HU

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A full-page photograph of cyclist Chris Froome in profile, facing right. He is wearing a bright yellow cycling jersey with 'LCL' and 'le coq sportif' logos, and a black cap with 'Rapha' written on it. A large, bright circular light source behind him creates a strong silhouette effect and a lens flare. The background is dark and out of focus.

Froome in the spotlight

The two-time Tour champion opens up about the pressures of stardom, the challenges ahead and his undiminished will to win

Richard Abraham

How many times have you tried riding your bike with one hand on the handlebars and with the other wheeling another bike along with you? It's tricky, even for someone who spends his or her life cycling. So tricky that when Chris Froome tried it last August to take his road and time trial bikes down to the car wash near his home in Monaco, he fell off.

The tale appeared in last December's report in *Esquire* about Chris Froome's physiological data (more on that later) where it was a funny little anecdote that explained Froome's grazed knees when he went for testing in August that year, albeit one which was drowned out by the clamour over VO2 max and weight loss.

What made it really remarkable is not that Chris Froome fell off his bike — he has a track record of doing that quite a lot — but that a sport star like him would even consider riding his own bikes down to the car wash to clean them just a couple of weeks after winning his second Tour de France.

Elite cyclists are certainly a long way from enjoying the celebrity status of the world's best footballers, for example, but then Chris Froome is further still from what we expect our 21st century sporting stars to be like. There's no entourage around him, his agent is simply his wife Michelle, and there's not much ego to speak of either. When he wins he thrusts his hands into the air and beams broadly from ear to ear. When he steps onto the podium, there is no 'pistolero' salute or Paul Weller-esque pouting. Instead he just wears an honest smile and gives the crowd a cheery wave. Attaining celebrity status, he says, is not his motivation.

"When we're talking about perception — image — it's not necessarily one of my big goals to be recognised or famous," he says. "My goals are very much on the sporting side of things."

More to come

According to Froome, there's still plenty of work to do. Despite winning the Tour twice, he would forgive us for saying he is not the best bike rider in the world. He's not an expert bike handler like Peter Sagan, nor does he exude class like Fabian Cancellara or Bradley Wiggins. In fact he doesn't really look that good on two wheels at all; he sticks his elbows out and

stares down at his stem all the time.

"Thankfully when it really comes down to the performance end of things, it's normally 10 or 15km up a mountain where you're going a maximum of 20kph, so aerodynamics aren't a dramatic thing for me," Froome admits. "My elbows do stick out a little bit."

Froome recognises that there is more he can get from himself, not only in terms of his position. There are few in the world in 2016 who can come close to his physical ability as a Grand Tour rider, but Project Froome is not about maintaining his current level; Froome thinks he can get even better.

"Physically I do have some things to improve on, it's always a work in progress," he explains. "I don't think there's a point you can get to and say: 'I'm at my best now.' Unless you're into your late 30s and on the way out, you should be looking to make some gains every year."

"Positioning is always something I can work on. Core stability, I think I can put out more power. Weight, I think I can get it lower; it's something you continuously have got to work on."

It's odd to hear this from a rider aged 30 with two Tours to his name. But remember that Froome came close to losing the 2015 Tour to Nairo Quintana when, suffering from a well-hidden cold, he desperately clung onto the yellow jersey on the final mountain showdown on Alpe d'Huez. Note also that Froome wasn't necessarily born to ride a bike. His two older brothers both attended an English public school and went on to work in finance. Froome junior is polite, well mannered and respectful; this isn't to say he's the only one in the peloton that is, only that he wouldn't look out of place in a business suit himself.

Former GB national coach and logistics manager Doug Dailey, who spotted Froome racing for Kenya at the 2006 Commonwealth Games and helped him switch to Great Britain, suggests that Froome could quite easily have ended up pushing pencils rather than pedals for a living. Indeed with his time with the Safari Simbaz club in Nairobi, Kenya, and breaking out of boarding school in South Africa to go riding in the early hours, Froome's sporting background has been

anything but traditional. He even had to break and enter, in an electronic sense, into the Kenyan cycling federation email account to enter himself into the 2006 World Championships in Salzburg.

To briefly go back to the crashes, Salzburg was where he famously rode at full pelt into a commissaire shortly after rolling down the start ramp in the U23 time trial (he also crashed in the neutral zone of stage one of the 2013 Tour — which you may have forgotten about — and twice during the opening stages of the 2014 edition, leading to his withdrawal).

Froome's story has now been well told, but it doesn't bring it any closer to the heavily structured and supported upbringing enjoyed by riders like Geraint Thomas and that current aspiring youngsters in Britain can expect.

"Chris Froome didn't get any of those advantages, which is most probably why he rides like he does," Dailey says. "I'm sure that had he come through our [British Cycling] system we might have

tackled those [cycling foibles] in his formative years."

However Dailey believes Froome's time spent unsupported in his own little bubble has nurtured

a different aptitude for the life of a professional rider; the ability to do things for himself. This perhaps explains why he takes his own bikes down to the car wash.

"Not only was he a determined and capable bike rider, with some obvious shortcomings in his style of riding, he was also a very intelligent boy," Dailey adds. "Early on I felt that this fellow would pick his way through the sport and filter out what is appropriate for him and filter out all the rubbish that comes at you. He made his own way very early on."

Froome didn't blossom under the somewhat Dickensian methods of his first professional manager Claudio Corti, the Italian boss of Barloworld between 2008 and 2009, and his race programme didn't help him either; it was limited in terms of stage race days and, in 2008, even included the odd day out at Ghent-Wevelgem, Scheldeprijs and Paris-Roubaix. Yet regardless of management and programme, just looking at pictures of Froome from 2007 to 2009 tells you that he was a rider who could

"Physically I do have some things to work on, it's always a work in progress"



"Damn I look good in yellow"

go considerably faster by simply losing weight and getting a proper bike-fit.

It's a conclusion that has been backed up by that physiological report published in December which, alongside a similar test taken when Froome was at the UCI's World Cycling Centre in the summer of 2007, purports to show that in the eight years to 2015, Froome's exceptionally high threshold power of 419W had hardly changed. What had changed was his weight — down from 75.6kg to 67kg — and his experience.

Froome dog and the G-man

Froome has undoubtedly come a long way from the naïve, chubby youngster thrown in at the shark-infested deep end of the pro ranks at the end of the Noughties. However there are still plenty of remaining challenges he has to face in 2016. One of them he has at least tackled before — that of being defending Tour de France champion.

"I was fully aware of this last time but I think going into a winter as the current Tour de France champion can be quite dangerous as you are getting loads of requests to go to different events, different functions, you're getting pulled left and right, everyone wants a piece of you," Froome says.

"The danger there is that you do end up losing focus of what you're really meant to do, which is the training and the actual riding side of things. So hopefully I've learned that lesson before, I've been in this position, I know what it's like and I'd like to think I'm on top of everything in terms of not getting too pulled around."

"Going into a winter as the current Tour de France champion can be quite dangerous"

One challenge that Froome hasn't faced before is that of fatherhood, though before his wife gave birth to his son, Kellan, he did acknowledge that "things were going to be pretty different."

Things will be pretty different on the bike, too. He has lost Richie Porte, his loyal lieutenant, close friend and neighbour in Monaco who was crucial in his two Tour wins, as the Australian joins BMC this season. Froome believes that Sky still possesses enough strength that another rider — be it Wout Poels, Nico Roche or any of the new signings Benat Intxausti, Mikel Landa and Michal Kwiatkowski — could step up to play Porte's role this year. However Porte's transition from super-domestique to dangerous rival should not be underestimated.

"It's definitely sad to see Richie go, of course he's been a massive part of everything," Froome says. "All in all we've lost a few guys, gained a few guys, but I do think we've got a really, really decent line up for next year."

With Porte's exit, at least 'Froomedog' is the uncontested top dog at Sky. But with his growing confidence and stage race ability, Geraint Thomas has become the young pretender to Froome's throne.

"The way G rode [at the Tour] last year, he definitely needs to be more

Doing the double

The Tour-Vuelta double is the most rare of Grand Tour doubles, having been achieved just twice; by Jacques Anquetil in 1963 and by Bernard Hinault in 1978. On both of those occasions, the Vuelta was in its former slot in mid-April.

Chris Froome has tackled the two races in the same season on two occasions, finishing fourth in the 2012 Vuelta as runner-up in the Tour and then abandoning on stage 11 of the 2015 edition as Tour champion. However he believes the double is still within reach.

"It is tough to race against those guys [specifically targeting the Vuelta] off the back of a Tour de France, but at the same time I don't think it's impossible," he says. "I certainly felt as if I was coming up through last year's Vuelta and I was certainly hoping for a better second half than the first one. But I guess that's something that's given me a bit of motivation for the future; that's not to say it's definitely on this year's calendar but I'll certainly consider it."

In comparison, the Giro-Tour double has been achieved 12 times (most recently by Marco Pantani in 1998) but Froome believes the test is now much harder to achieve, as demonstrated by Alberto Contador in 2011 and 2015.

"I do think it's possible, but I think it's probably more doable, more realistic, to look at Tour-Vuelta than Giro-Tour, just given that the second Grand Tour that you do consecutively, you're going to have that mental fatigue and you wouldn't have had the best preparation for the second race," Froome says.

"Given that the Tour really is a level above any other race on the calendar, I'd say it would be pretty hard to do."



Froome: tight-lipped on his 2016 Vuelta plans

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About disability



protected [in 2016] and have a go at the GC himself,” Froome agrees.

We ask whether he can feel the hot breath of the Welsh dragon on the back of his neck. Does he think that Sky might become too small to accommodate the talent and ambition of the two of them together? Would one have to eventually see off the other one, however amicably, as has happened with Porte — and, before that, Sir Bradley Wiggins?

Froome declines to get drawn into that debate, adding tactfully: “It’s something that’s continuous and maybe in a way we’ll push each other a little bit and maybe get a bit more out of ourselves and improve.”

French rancour

In a way it’s fortunate that Chris Froome doesn’t need the fame to spur him on (as for the fortune, a reported £2m deal with Sky means he can’t be doing too badly out of it, and the thing about living in Monaco is that not much of that will have gone to HMRC). That’s because there wasn’t a lot of love going around in France last summer. The scrutiny, the whispers, the conspiracy theories and the suspicion, not to mention the physical abuse including a cup of urine and a glob of spit; Froome’s 2015 Tour was a particularly stressful affair. Team-mates like Luke Rowe have spoken strongly about the experience, also explaining how it brought the team together, but during our interview Froome remains notably objective.

“Maybe it is that the team is

“G needs to be more protected this year and have a go at the GC himself”

challenging potentially the traditional way things were done in the past and maybe certain people don’t like that,” he suggests delicately. The closest he gets to lambasting his accusers is when asked whether he has spoken to Laurent Jalabert, the former rider turned French TV commentator who described Froome’s ride on stage 10 of last year’s Tour as “out of this world”, a highly charged phrase previously used by *L’Equipe* to thinly veil their suspicion of Lance Armstrong.

“It seemed that every time that I got close to [Laurent] Jalabert after the stages he seemed to move away pretty quickly,” Froome says. “When he was asked to comment he also made a pretty quick getaway. It’s pretty cowardly; if he’s going to make those sorts of comments he should be able to back them up.”

Froome clearly suppressed his emotions during the Tour, refusing to vent any anger or frustration in public, but he didn’t appear to be totally thick-skinned. The abuse, the accusations and the tone of inquisition, did get to him, even if now his feelings have gravitated more towards detached fatigue than raw exasperation.

“I’ve got to say in the grander

Olympic dilemma

How do you solve a problem like Rio? Froome went to reconnoitre the hilly and difficult road race course in November during his off-season but, before you even take into account Froome’s unenviable track record in one-day races, the Olympics is one of the hardest races to successfully target and win.

“The Olympic road race and time trial are always a little bit of a gamble, especially on the back of a Tour de France,” Froome says.

Unlike one-day specialists, who can ride the Tour conservatively and tactically, Froome might not be able to emerge from Paris without all his matches burned. However unlike 2012, which left six days between the Champs-Élysées and the road race in London, this time there is a longer period for him to rest and recover.



Le Tour and Olympic gold?
No harm in aiming high

Froome even suggests there will be time for a post-Tour, pre-Olympic training block.

“We’ve got two weeks from the Champs-Élysées until the start of the road race I think,” Froome says. “So I think that’s enough time to recover and probably get a small training block in before going over to Rio.”

Froome believes he can still improve physically



Froome endured all manner of abuse at the 2015 Tour stoically and with dignity

scheme of things it was a minority. The majority of support on the Tour and of the team, everything, really has been overwhelming sometimes. But there were certainly individuals along the way who made it clear they weren't supporting us.

"We certainly didn't have any of that at any other events," he explains. "At the Vuelta there certainly wasn't a bad word said; it's a great atmosphere and the fans seem to be cheering for everyone and that's what bike racing should be.

"Just after the Tour we went and did some post-Tour criteriums, a few of those were in France and I've got to say it was just fantastic, the sentiment in France was great after the Tour, even passing through some of the places from the Tour there wasn't a single negative thing said, so it does feel very much like it was a Tour de France thing."

Failing the Classics

Chris Froome's track record in the one-day Classics is far from exemplary. His best results are 34th in Flèche Wallonne in 2009 and 36th in Liège-Bastogne-Liège in 2013, though he finished last year's Flèche Wallonne with torn and bloodied shorts over 12 minutes behind winner Alejandro Valverde.

Unlike his rival Vincenzo Nibali — who has won the Tour of Lombardy and finished on the podium in Liège-Bastogne-Liège and Milan-San Remo — Froome has always struggled with the demands of one-day racing: the distance, the narrow northern European roads, and the cut-throat, elbows-out battle for position over six or seven hours.

Despite impressing on stage three of the 2015 Tour, finishing second on the Mur de Huy to Joaquim Rodríguez, Froome is keen to downplay his ambition and chances in the Classics in the near future.

"It's maybe something that is on the cards," he says of a potential Classics tilt this season. "Of course in the Grand Tour you've got guys with other goals; maybe they're saving themselves for the next day or they've gone deep the day before so they're maybe not on their best on that day. You know at a one-day Classic everybody is going to be at his best for that day.

"Liège is always a race that I've wanted to do and wanted to do well in. I'd love to do well there one day but I've got to keep trying."

"I don't have any skeletons in the closet, I have nothing to be genuinely afraid of"

Dominant Tour riders getting abuse — or at the very least a frosty reception — is not a new thing. Eddy Merckx, Jacques Anquetil, Miguel Indurain all won five Tours but were never as popular in France as other riders in their era. Merckx was even punched in the abdomen on the Puy de Dome in 1975, what he now jokingly calls his 'French souvenir.' The only rider to have won five Tours and remain popular in the process is Bernard Hinault, and he's French.

"I definitely felt this year that it was an element that made this year's Tour de France harder," Froome says. "Anyone who is human would have felt more under pressure this year.

"In a way, getting those accusations is the ultimate compliment but at the same time I'm certainly not taking it as a compliment," he adds. "It's unfortunate that's what the yellow jersey wearer of the Tour de France has to put up with. For me, I think, when I'm in that position, if I had something to hide or I had some elaborate scheme going on then it would really bother me, it would be my whole world crashing down.

"But I don't have any skeletons in the closet, I don't have anything to genuinely be afraid of."

During our interview Froome is asked whether he feels the hostility he experienced was down to a French attitude towards an Englishman winning. Froome turns to ask a French journalist for *L'Equipe*, Alexandre Roos, for his opinion: "I'd be interested to hear, Alex what would you put this down to? Is it winning in a certain way?"

"I would say that there is no anti-Froome sentiment in France, more like an anti-Sky," Roos says. "I think you are quite popular in France. I think it's more about Sky and the way that they arrived in the peloton. In France, the people that run cycling are very conservative."

Cloud of suspicion

No matter how hard Froome might like to try to prove otherwise, there is currently an unavoidable suspicion around the

modern Tour de France winner. The release of his physiological data only served to prove this; Froome's numbers were abnormally high — those of an exceptional athlete. But then he won the Tour de France, so of course he's a physical abnormality.

There are those that say that Chris Froome doesn't look like a true Tour de France winner, with his unorthodox background and gangly style. But then what does a true Tour winner look like in 2016? After two decades of artificially enhanced Tour performances, the cycling world probably doesn't know the answer to that question.

As for the UK, Froome isn't interested in filling the gap of British Tour winner left by Bradley Wiggins. He says he would like to race more in his adopted home country — a move that would help to boost his public profile — but his message is clear: not if it compromises the Tour.

"I would like to do more racing in the UK. But the times of the races we do get the opportunity to do, such as the Nationals, are just a week before the Tour," he says, almost apologetically.

"It's pretty difficult to go, with races like that, and the Tour of Britain coinciding with the Vuelta, unfortunately."

There is something else he is interested in, and something which would undoubtedly endear him to the British public: a gold medal in Rio. We ask him which one he would choose if he were offered the choice of either definite Tour victory or Olympic gold in 2016.

"That would be... I'd definitely be torn there, that would be a hard decision to make," he says. "I mean, either would just be amazing. I'd be torn."

However there are some things that aren't in doubt. Froome says his motivation, after a crash and a broken foot on stage 11 of last year's Vuelta brought a premature end to his season, is greater than ever.

"It meant I could start focusing on the next season a bit earlier and in a way it's made me even more... it's given me that hunger again," he says of his injury.

"I feel as though I was robbed of something so I feel as though now I really can't wait to get back into it again. In some ways it's maybe not such a bad thing."

And whether or not he succeeds, there's one other thing that we can count on: Froome isn't going to be doing it any way but his own. ■



Epic days Milan-San Remo 2013

Despite freezing conditions and heavy snowfall forcing this edition of the Classic to take a mid-race interval, over half the field still toughed it out to the finish



Micky McMahon

La Classicissima di Primavera (the Spring Classic) falls in mid-March and has, in its 108-year history, regularly fallen victim to bad weather. At 298 kilometres long, it is the longest one-day race in the calendar, meaning that when conditions are less than ideal riders must endure wind, rain or snow, for longer than they might usually be expected to.

The 2013 edition of the race saw 200 riders take the start line south of Milan. Cold conditions and heavy snowfall had meant that the two key climbs of Passo del Turchino and Le Manie, falling at the 140-kilometre mark, were eliminated, as the weather quickly turned from light snow and sleet to something resembling a blizzard.

As the mercury continued to drop and visibility became severely impaired, organisers determined that it was too hazardous to continue, and the race was neutralised after 112km. The riders were ordered to board cars and team buses, and transported to the restart point.

During the hiatus, riders posted pictures of their frozen beards and icicles hanging from their helmets on social media. One of the most memorable sights was that of Australian hardman Heinrich Haussler, who, while others retired or desperately attempted to get heat into their bodies, rode without gloves, to the astonishment of others in the peloton.

Sylvain Chavanel, who finished fourth behind eventual winner Gerald Ciolek, used the unplanned bus transfer to recuperate, and lauded the achievement of the 135 that had reached San Remo. "During the race neutralisation I tried to sleep and recover," said Chavanel. "I think all of the riders that finished are a little bit heroic. The conditions were really extreme." ■

Photo: Yuzuru Sumada

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Peter Sagan's Specialized S-Works Venge Vias

Launched in 2015 ahead of the Tour de France, the radical new Venge gets a world champ's makeover

Oliver Bridgewood

The new Venge was launched with bold marketing claims that included the assertion that it is two minutes faster over 40km than the Tarmac. This is the stuff racing dreams are made of.

But despite having this radical new Venge Vias at his disposal, Peter Sagan chose to ride the Specialized S-Works Tarmac with stunning effect to his first World Championship road race win.

So why didn't Sagan use it in Richmond? The new Venge is slightly heavier than the old one, meaning that it could feel more sluggish when accelerating or attacking on short, sharp climbs (a 54cm frame weighs a not insubstantial 1,150g). Also, factor in that aerodynamics are much less important when you are shielded inside a peloton. Or perhaps it was the integrated brakes that put him off.

One thing is for certain: the iridescent custom paintjob on Sagan's 2016 model, combined with one of the most advanced bikes ever created, is a beautiful package. We hope to see a lot of it this year.

Electronic shifting

Naturally the bike is fitted with Shimano Dura-Ace Di2. Tinkoff are continuing to use SRM power meters this season. Wheels are Specialized's in-house brand, Roval.

Stunning frame finish

The sublime and incredibly detailed paint job contains flecks of sparkly paint and beautiful transitions between different colours. The names of all of the previous road race world champions are included in the white S-Works logo.

Integrated brakes are shielded from the wind

The logo pays homage to every previous world champ

Special livery

The camouflage pattern that Sagan has used on many of his bikes over the previous few years is also updated in rainbow colours, while the Slovak's personal logo still adorns the seat tube.

One-piece cockpit

The integrated bar and stem combo contains all the brake and gear cables.

Stealth brakes

Innovative design or mechanics' nightmare? The integrated brakes positioned behind the seat tube and fork are designed to reduce drag.



Sagan's own logo sits on the down tube

WHAT THEY SAY



Chris Riekert

Marketing manager,
Specialized Bicycles

"We have extreme testing protocols for helping athletes choose the best equipment for that day. We provide performance analysis and ultimately it is a toss-up about how they are going to put the power down. For what Peter wanted to do (win the Worlds) the Tarmac was better suited than the Venge.

"We gave riders the new Venge too close to the start of the Tour de France for them to adapt to it. It truly is the fastest bike on the market, you are going to see a lot more of it now the riders have got used to it."

HOT STUFF

Giro Synthe MIPS £224.99

As worn by Katusha and BMC, the Synthe previously won our aero helmets group test.

We now have the updated MIPS (Multi-Directional Impact Protection System) version, which is said to provide more protection in certain impacts. It is, however, £25 more expensive.

Contact: www.zyro.co.uk

Report: February



Rapha Pro Team softshell jacket £200

Rapha's softshell is designed to be a versatile jacket for high-intensity riding in wet conditions. The new Pro Team softshell features Polartec's Power Shield Pro fabric in a bid to make the jacket more breathable than the previous version.

Contact: www.rapha.cc

Report: January



Edco Prosport wheels

This new wheelset sees Edco move away from Reynolds rims, in favour of its own new U-shaped profile that boasts an improved braking surface. The hub is compatible with both Campagnolo and Shimano, while the rims are tubeless compatible. These hoops also come complete with 25mm Continental GP4000s tyres.

www.edco-wheels.co.uk

Price: £1,299

Report: March



Gaerne G.Sincro shoes £213.99

With eye-catching styling, the G.Sincro shoe shares a lot of similarities with the Gaerne Stilo road shoe. Designed for cyclo-cross and mtb, the stiff sole gives a feeling of direct contact and control when manoeuvring at lower speeds. An aggressive tread means good mud-shedding. A less rigid sole would perhaps be preferable for longer stretches on foot, but I had no complaints about traction, particularly with the screw-in toe spikes fitted. A double boa closure along with a single Velcro strap enables complete security in the smallest of increments, with easy adjustment while on the bike. Overall, it's a very comfortable race shoe that's equally adept at short, snappy races as it is all-day leisure rides. *Simon Scarsbrook* **407g**

www.chainreactioncycles.com

8



Lusso Aqua Repel jacket £129.99

Lusso's water-resistant jacket comes in this fetching light blue as well as black. It's a good fit, with plenty of length in the arms and the body, and a dropped tail so that you don't get so wet from wheel spray. It's got three rear pockets plus a fourth zipped one for valuables and reflectives at the rear. The neck comes up high for extra protection and is close fitting. I didn't find the Aqua Repel as breathable or as insulating as some jackets and there did seem to be some wind cutting through the fabric. I also found I got quite damp and it felt a bit clammy at the end of a ride. *Paul Norman* **431g**

www.lusso.bike



7



Bollé 6th Sense glasses with Modulator Rose Gun lens £139

You may recognise the 6th Senses as being worn by Orica-GreenEdge and Ag2r La Mondiale riders. The Rose Gun lens is not the darkest offered by Bollé and is ideal for winter riding, where the sun can often be low and daylight hours short. The Modulator, photochromic lens adjusts to the light, providing enhanced contrast, while the mirrored finish reflects glare. Being very light you can easily forget you are wearing them — the temples and nosepiece are adjustable so you can optimise the fit. Lenses can be switched out and the optics really are among the best we have used in sports sunglasses. The 6th Sense design offers a really good field of vision that remains unobstructed even when you're head-down on the drops. *Oliver Bridgewood* **28g** www.bolle-europe.co.uk

9



Castelli Reflex shoe cover £75

By day they're a typical grey pair of overshoes; by night they light up brightly in a car's headlights. I found the Reflex a good fit, although the zips were a bit fiddly to get started on their way up. They're displaced away from the back of the heel, so they aren't uncomfortable and don't rub when you're riding. The overshoes have a base made of a more resilient fabric that has so far resisted abrasion. There's a moderate level of insulation, so I haven't found my feet getting cold on cool, damp rides and the overshoes have proved water-resistant too.

Paul Norman **115g**

www.saddleback.co.uk

9



Giro Blaze gloves £29.99

The level of protection given by the Giro Blaze gloves is perfect for current conditions. There's a thin layer of insulation to keep the back of the hand protected from the wind and to hold in warmth. It also features a water-resistant treatment that is good enough to cope with a light shower. However, there's certainly room for improvement when it comes to comfort, with the internal seams being fairly prominent, and becoming a bit annoying over longer rides. It's a shame because many of the finer details are good, with a nose wipe on the thumb and a small area of stitching on the end of the index finger to enable you to use a touch-screen.

Henry Robertshaw **66g**

www.zyro.co.uk

7

Gore Element Windstopper Soft Shell Vest £79.99

Product of the week

Designed to keep your torso warm during cold weather, this Gore gilet offers substantially more insulation and windproofing than a lightweight emergency gilet and consequently isn't designed to be stuffed in a jersey pocket. The fit is very good, with a size medium fitting me perfectly (I am 6ft 1in and weigh 70kg), with the Windstopper fabric giving a good amount of stretch. The breathability is also excellent for high-intensity riding. The two back pockets are of a decent size, while the front zipped pocket is incredibly useful for a phone, keys or wallet.

Oliver Bridgewood **345g**

www.goreapparel.co.uk



9

Santini Vega Acquazero bibtights £129.99

Even if you manage to avoid riding in the rain this winter, you're still going to be riding on wet roads, at which point you might wish you'd bought these excellent water-resistant tights from Santini. The Acquazero water-resistant treatment does a great job of keeping your shins and thighs dry from road spray, which really helps to keep you warm too. Of course, in persistent or heavy rain it is overcome, but then I haven't tried a pair of bibtights where this isn't the case.

The only downside is the lack of insulation, with the Vega bibtights not being made of a Roubaix fabric, meaning they're not warm enough for temperatures around freezing.

Henry Robertshaw **331g**

www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk



8

LONG TERM TEST

Six months later

Garmin Epix watch £419.99

The Epix multi-sport watch has all the cycling metrics you could want. Once you've got used to its functionality it is straightforward to use. The battery life is good and it is impressively robust. However, there are cheaper cycling specific options and it is slow to sync to Garmin Connect. CH

www.garmin.com

8



Epix: solid performer

Can't live without

Morgan Blue Chain Cleaner £10.95

This is the best chain cleaner I have ever used. You simply let the liquid soak in for five minutes and then rinse off. It gets your chain looking good as new every time, even after months of riding in poor weather. CH

www.windwave.co.uk



Morgan Blue: chain saviour

Enigma Elite

HSS ST £3,390

Tested by: Henry Robertshaw | Miles ridden: 311 |
Size tested: 56cm | Weight: 8.08kg/17.8lb

The star of the Enigma Elite show is without question the frame. Made from Columbus Spirit HSS triple-buttressed steel tubing, each frame is constructed by Enigma's small team of experienced frame-builders in

the company's East Sussex workshop.

As you'd expect from a steel bike there's also an option to have the frame built with custom geometry to suit your requirements, although you will have to add £300 to the asking price for this service.

The other thing I have to mention is that paintjob. One of two standard colour schemes on offer, the pages of this magazine really struggle to do justice to how — well — orange that orange is.

However, if you'd like your bike to be a little more understated, then other custom paintjobs are available, ranging from basic solid colours for £210, up to fully custom designs that can be brought to life by Enigma's in-house paintshop.

Specification

Although the Enigma website offers three different builds for the Elite HSS, the company will be happy to spec the bike as per your requirements.

This test model came with an Italian build to match the

Italian tubing. The groupset is the latest iteration of Campagnolo Chorus, which comes with precise shifting and a four-arm spider design that is a serious aesthetic departure from the five-arm Campag cranksets of old, and is likely to divide opinion among the purists.

The groupset is matched with Campagnolo Zonda wheels, far from the lightest or stiffest wheels on the market, but a good match for a frame that thrives on less-than-perfect road surfaces. These are topped with Michelin Pro4

Service Course tyres — lovely fast tyres for summer rides, complete with white sidewalls to match the frame.

Ride

The rear end might not be as stiff as a similarly priced carbon bike (although it's not far off), and weighing in at 8.08kg means that it can't compete head-on in a scales challenge either, but all of that is completely missing the point when it comes to what this bike is so very good at.

The steel frame is perfect for British roads, soaking

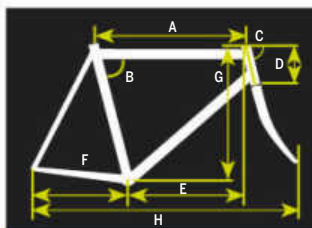


Enigma Elite HSS

£3,390

Frame	■■■■■■■■■■	10/10
Specification	■■■■■■■■■	8/10
Ride	■■■■■■■■■	9/10
Value	■■■■■■■■■	8/10

Distributor	www.enigmabikes.com
Frame	Enigma HSS ST, Columbus Spirit HSS niobium steel tube set
Fork	Full-carbon monocoque tapered fork
Size range	53, 55, 56, 57, 59cm
Weight	8.08kg/17.8lb
Groupset	Campagnolo Chorus
Alterations	None
Gear ratios	50/34t, 11-25t
Wheels	Campagnolo Zonda
Tyres	Michelin Pro4 Service Course
Bar	Enigma Aluminium
Stem	Enigma Aluminium
Seatpost	Bontrager Ride Tuned carbon seatmast cap
Saddle	Fizik Arione



SIZE TESTED: 56

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
56cm	73°	73°	16.5cm	56.8cm	40.9cm	38.7cm	98.5cm



Sleek frame, stunning paintjob



Zonda wheels can handle the bumps

up road buzz with aplomb, leaving your legs free to put down some power rather than taking a battering from poor tarmac. This superb ride quality also gives you the confidence to attack rough descents knowing that the tyres will stay glued to the road. This is a great attribute for any bike to have, and makes the Elite HSS ST more than worthy for consideration as your next race bike, especially if you're worried about how your bike will fare

in the event of a crash. It's also fair to say I had a hell of a lot more fun riding this bike than I have on a number of hyper-expensive carbon machines.

Value

Unfortunately, with the level of craftsmanship that goes into a steel frame, you're always going to pay a premium. This is especially so

with one that is manufactured in the UK, and made out of lightweight materials that enable the Elite HSS ST to be valued as a great bike for more than just its robustness. However it's hard to overlook

the appeal of an indestructible frame. You could snap a carbon bike in half on a crash on your very first ride, leaving yourself stumping up for a new frame and seriously out of pocket. But with a steel frame you're investing in a bike that will be able to soak up years of abuse, be easily repairable in the event of a crash and still be as good to ride as ever.

Verdict

Thankfully there is much more to buying a bike than getting out a spreadsheet and finding the lightest/stiffest/most aerodynamic machine you can buy for your money, which is why we still get to see stunning bikes such as the Enigma Elite HSS ST.

This is a bike that sits right on the line between form and function. The frame really is a thing of beauty, with a paintjob that makes it look bang up to date without looking out of place on a material that has been used to make bikes for well over a century.

It's also one of the most fun bikes I've ever had the pleasure of riding. The 8.08kg weight means it's never going to be the most agile climber, but you

never get the impression that you're having to lumber up steep gradients, while the excellent handling and smooth ride quality allows you to attack descents and nip along dodgy lanes without feeling like you're being bounced all over the road.

And the best thing is that you can buy this bike safe in the knowledge that you'll still be having the same amount of fun in 10 years' time.

9

For

- Beautiful frame
- British made
- Great fun to ride
- Comfortable on British roads

Against

- A little expensive

Waterproof jackets

Chris Hovenden
braves one of the wettest winters on record to test five fine examples of rainwear

What?

A waterproof jacket's remit is a fairly simple one. Keeping the rain out is easy enough — the difficulty arises when you want a material that is also breathable. Generally, all waterproof jackets keep out the rain but more expensive models offer better ventilation and have additional features, such as waterproof zips and storm flaps. There are lightweight water-repellent jackets that can be stuffed into a pocket as well as more heavy-duty options intended to be worn all day.

Why?

No one likes getting soaked through so if you want to enjoy riding outside during the wet winter months a good quality waterproof jacket is a sound investment. It will stop the rain and wheel spray getting through to your skin while also providing enough ventilation so that you don't overheat on harder rides.

How?

The waterproof jackets were put through their paces on wet rides, both when the temperature dropped and on milder days. When testing the jackets, the main considerations taken into account were how well they kept out water, breathability, fit and aesthetics.

HOW WE SCORE

- 10 - Superb, best in its class and we couldn't fault it.
- 9 - Excellent, a slight change and it would be perfect
- 8 - Brilliant, we'd happily buy it
- 7 - Solid, but there's better out there
- 6 - Pretty good, but not quite hitting the mark
- 5 - Okay, nothing wrong with it, but nothing special
- 4 - A few niggles let this down
- 3 - Disappointing
- 2 - Poor, approach with caution
- 1 - Terrible, do not buy this product

Rapha Pro Team Race Cape £195

Although the Data Print design may prove divisive, there is a lot to like about the Race Cape. It is packed full of nice features like the zipped cuffs, which make getting the coat on and off easy, as well as the comfortable neoprene neck. With a close and slim fit, which makes use of the coat's stretchy fabric, the Race Cape certainly lives up to its name. The proprietary waterproof material, the fully taped seams and the drop-tail did a superb job of keeping out the rain. Likewise the Race Cape's combination of a standard zip and external flap, rather than a waterproof zip, didn't let any water in. There is a lack of pockets, which means that any supplies will need to be stored in your jersey, but should the weather improve you can fit it into a jersey pocket at a push. The jacket is very impressive, but for the price I would want a more breathable fabric and, despite all the tech involved, the exposed Lycra cuffs did get wet.

Weight
207
grams

8

Contact: www.rapha.cc
Size tested: medium
Size range: XS-XXL
Colour options: dark grey/green



Dhb Classic Rain Shell £50

Dhb has created a lightweight waterproof jacket packed full of tech, at a very modest price. The 2.5 layer waterproof fabric performed well in lighter rain and, importantly, the jacket was one of the most breathable on test. There is a shaped drop-tail for extra coverage from wheel spray, but it could be longer, and there are strategically placed details to enhance visibility. The fit is far more relaxed than some of the other options on test, but allows you to wear a few layers beneath the jacket on colder days. The elasticated cuffs and the micro-fleece-lined collar are comfortable even after many miles. You can pack your ride essentials into a small zipped pocket or pack the jacket away should the weather improve — although it is a struggle to get it into a jersey pocket. The only real criticism is that in heavy and persistent rain you will want a jacket that is more substantial. There are better quality jackets on test, but you'll struggle to find a better value waterproof.

Weight
181
grams

7

Contact: www.wiggle.co.uk
Size tested: medium
Size options: XS-XXL
Colour options: navy/pink, black/red, pink/navy, red/black



Gore Oxygen £219.99

When it comes to keeping the rain out, while still offering great breathability, Gore-Tex material is still the best we have tested. The cut around the arms, back and shoulders of the Oxygen is good and is designed for an on-bike position. However, being a hardshell, there is no stretch in the fabric and you will create noticeably more drag than if you were wearing a tighter, stretchier garment. Two zipped side openings allow for access to the jersey pockets, but this can be a fiddle, especially when wearing gloves. Packability is OK — you can get this jacket in a jersey pocket. Retailing at £219.99, the Oxygen is expensive; however, cheaper waterproofs tend to wear out much more quickly, meaning that despite the extra expense, if you buy cheap you will probably find yourself buying twice. The great thing about Gore-Tex is that, as long as the membrane remains intact, it will continue to be waterproof. If you often ride in prolonged rain, the Oxygen 2.0 is a good investment.

Weight
275
grams

8

Contact: www.goreapparel.co.uk
Size tested: medium
Sizes: S, M, L, XL, XXL
Colour options: red/black, black



Hoy Vulpine Portixol £98.99

Considering this is the debut winter season for the Hoy Vulpine collaboration, this is an impressive, high-quality product. The jacket has a race cut, but the generous sizing means you could opt for a size lower than usual and still get a snug fit. From its lightweight fabric (it is the one of the heaviest jackets on test, but still below 250g), to the sleek waterproof zip, this jacket proved consistently reliable. The water repellent material coped well in both light and heavy downpours — no water managed to penetrate. Although the jacket's breathability could have been better, I rarely overheated when riding hard, in part due to the vents under the arms and on the back. The Portixol is far from the most packable waterproof jacket on test; it is certainly one designed for when the weather forecast predicts all-day rain. Nonetheless, on such occasions, wearing it for several hours was never a problem. This is a very competitive waterproof jacket that is hard to beat on quality.

Weight
231
grams

8

Contact: www.evanscycles.com
Size tested: small
Size range: S-XXL
Colour options: black, red



Sportful Hotpack NoRain £120

**BEST
ON TEST**

Also available in the more practical colours of yellow and black, the NoRain is a great option for keeping you dry without overheating. The main panels of the jacket (the bits in white) are made from Sportful's Aquashield material, giving fantastic waterproof protection, while the black area is still waterproof but has a little more stretch. This means that the fit of the jacket is second to none, with minimal wind-flap. At a svelte 135g, it is the lightest jacket on test, which seemed to help with breathability. Indeed, I rarely overheated and the jacket packs down small enough to fit into a rear jersey pocket. There are also a few nice little touches such as the thumb loops that are integrated into the comfortable cuffs. All that is very impressive, but it still isn't quite the perfect waterproof jacket — the dropped tail could be a little longer for extra coverage from wheel spray, and it's a little pricy.

Weight
135
grams

9

Contact: www.c3products.com
Size tested: medium
Sizes: XS-XXXL
Colour options: white, yellow, black



FITNESS

How do I... pre-empt bad driving?

Drivers will always make mistakes — understanding why could save your life

David Bradford

It might not always seem like it, but Britain's roads are relatively safe. With just 3.5 road deaths per 100,000 inhabitants per year, the UK has fewer fatalities per head of population than most other countries in the world. However, this shouldn't obscure the reality that cyclists account for around 11 per cent of the UK's total road casualties despite the fact we constitute only one per cent of traffic.

CW spoke to Dr Graham Hole, University of Sussex psychologist and author of *The Psychology of Driving*, to try to find out why cycling accidents happen and how best to steer clear of the risks.

"It's estimated that 30 per cent of accidents involve drivers who are distracted in some way," Hole says. "That's a huge proportion, and it hammers home the need to be on the lookout for those not paying full attention to the road.

"Cars are being fitted with ever more technology, gadgets that can easily distract; the problem is getting worse and worse," Hole continues. "I held my head in my hands when I found out recently

that some new Vauxhalls are going to come with their own Wi-Fi."

Of course,

cyclists can be distracted too, particularly by fixating too much on computers, GPS, smartphones and apps such as Strava Live. Remember: first priority is the road ahead and its potential hazards.

One of the most common causes of serious cycling accidents is cars pulling directly into our path. Why does this happen so often? "One problem is cyclists being in parts of the road where drivers don't expect them," says Hole. "When a driver arrives at a junction, they have very strong expectations about where they are likely to spot other traffic, and cyclists are often in unusual positions relative to other traffic."

This is a well-established psychological phenomenon: many drivers who claim, "I just didn't see you," have been let down not by their eyes but by their brain — they consciously registered only what they expected to see, while failing to perceive unexpected elements.

There is no failsafe solution, but that doesn't mean you're powerless, as Hole explains: "You just have to assume you are invisible. When I cycle, based on knowing the research, I wear fluorescent clothing, lights, fluorescent helmet... I assume no one has seen me and cycle defensively; that is the real solution."

Essential points

- Beware of distracted drivers
- Assume you haven't been seen
- Use retro-reflective kit at night

Do: use cars for cover

Cyclists are better detected when there is a car behind them than when on their own. It may seem counter-intuitive, but it makes sense when you consider that drivers may be looking for and expecting other cars, not bikes.

Don't: overestimate your visibility

At night, fluorescent clothing is no more visible than any other light-coloured clothing. You need retro-reflective strips that reflect car headlights.

Don't: assume you've been seen

Generally, you'll only collide with a car if it was so close when it emerged that you couldn't brake in time — you're clearly visible at that range, well above sensory threshold for the driver, even in peripheral vision. It's more an attentional thing — to do with expectations.

YOU SAY

Ride the same routes consistently. You get a feel for what the traffic is like, and how to integrate into it.
Tom Hammersley

I go out 5:30 in the morning when there are fewer morons on the roads.

Steve Brown



Do: illuminate your knees and elbows

Research has indicated that retro-reflective strips are most effective when adorning the rider's moving joints, the knees and elbows. Movement is more easily detected by the human visual system, and we can perceive human shapes quite well on the basis of isolated, moving spots of light.

Do: make eye contact

A study using eye-tracking glasses showed that 23 per cent of drivers using their sat-nav, 19 per cent of non-distracted drivers, and more than a third of drivers aged 20-29 fail to fixate on cyclists. Try to make eye contact, but don't take this as a guarantee you've been seen.

Do: use flashing lights

Dr Graham Hole is researching the effectiveness of flashing versus non-flashing lights. It may be that, in traffic at night, flashing lights help with distinguishing cyclists from cars. Hole suspects the brain uses a kind of shorthand code for detecting various kinds of road users: flashing lights subliminally imply 'cyclist'.

Avoid rush hours and avoid roads with big lorries where possible.

Gregg Baker

Ride thinking you are invisible to traffic and that everyone wants to kill you.

Eric Morris

Two lights at the front, two at the rear and a Proviz jacket.

Jim Morrison

Ride with spikes straight off Ben-Hur's chariot.

Jason O'Brien

Things to try this week

Torq gel

Available in forest fruits with guarana or banoffee with guarana, each gel weighs 45g. This is a lot less bulky than other gels on the market while still providing 28g of carbohydrate. Both flavours contain 89mg of caffeine per gel; however, Torq does offer non-caffeinated gels in other flavours if required.

£33.30 for a box of 20 gels

www.torqfitness.co.uk



Boat pose

This exercise, known as navasana (translated as 'boat pose'), can help increase your core strength. This is key to increasing power transfer and helps fight off lower back pain on cold winter rides.



■ Lie on your back with feet together, knees bent and arms out straight in front of you.

■ Slowly raise your back and off the floor ensuring you don't round your shoulders, keeping your arms out.

■ Once your torso is at a 45-degree angle, slowly lift your feet off the floor, while maintaining a strong posture and extending your legs.

■ Raise your feet until your legs are completely straightened and hold for 20 seconds.

■ At first you may find it difficult to keep your legs straight without hunching your back, so it may be easier to complete the half boat pose, which entails holding the pose with bent legs.

Eggs

Porridge may well be the breakfast of choice for the majority of cyclists before a long weekend ride during the season, but winter is the time to mix up your diet and add eggs to your morning routine.

Eggs are a great source of protein, as well as keeping hunger at bay, and also contain many different vitamins and minerals, which are especially important during winter. Add this to the wide variety of ways eggs can be cooked, and they provide an alternative to porridge that may be just the dietary monotony-breaker you need.



Should your bike-fit put your body first?

Has the traditional bike-fit fixated too much on the bike while ignoring what's best for the body?

Simon Schofield explores the physio-led method

The benefits of a bike-fit are now well established. A properly conducted bike-fit will help ensure that rider and machine work in harmony. This usually focuses on tweaks to the bike, taking it for granted that the rider will fit their theoretical optimal position. But perhaps this logic should be turned on its head; that is, by putting the rider first. Is the best possible bike-fit one that is led by a specialist physiotherapist?

The aim of a bike-fit is to get the bike perfectly set up for the rider, making it the ideal platform for efficient, economical and comfortable cycling. Focusing foremost on the bike in the traditional way is understandable for two reasons: firstly, having had their position analysed by an expert, a good number of riders benefit from refinements, or even big changes, to their bike setup. Secondly, it is easier to make adjustments to a bike than to a rider — a few turns of an Allen key and a few millimetres of adjustment take very little time.

Injury through ignorance

A really comprehensive bike-fit will, of course, also look at the rider and subject them to a full physical assessment, examining factors such as leg length discrepancies, flexibility and range of movement of limbs. But while physical assessment is usually given due weight in the bike-fit process, it may uncover problems that can't be fixed by an Allen key. Not all bike-fitters are experts in physiology, such as those who are from a retail or coaching background.

If a physiological problem is uncovered by a bike-fitter, they are highly unlikely to offer much in the way of serious therapy. Many will try their best, suggesting exercises that might help; but without specialist knowledge, their capacity

to diagnose and devise treatment programmes is severely limited.

This is why the next turn of the wheel in the development of bike-fitting is the addition of direct physiotherapist involvement. The trend is championed by Phil Burt, head physiotherapist at British Cycling and consultant physio to Team Sky. Burt's book *Bike-fit: Optimise Your Position for High Performance and Injury Avoidance*, places emphasis on riders' bodies and addresses the bike-fit process with a strong therapeutic influence.

"If the restrictions or limitations on the optimal bike position are of a medical nature, a physio is probably best placed to see you through these. Many bike-fitters get stuck at musculoskeletal problems and the good ones refer on to a specialist, which is sensible," says Burt.

"But there is a danger that bike-fitters who don't understand the exact nature of the limitations plough on and run the risk of getting a rider into a position that could actually cause damage.

"At the very extreme end, you could see a rider, especially one who's being fitted for a TT position, being placed into a position with a hip angle so closed that there's a real danger of doing damage to the iliac artery — a condition that can stop someone cycling," warns Burt.

Tweak away the pain

The physio-led bike-fit is most likely to appeal to riders experiencing discomfort on the bike. Indeed, that's the starting point for many of the consultations performed by chartered physiotherapist and bike-fitter Ian Blackburn.

Blackburn is the team physiotherapist for Dimension Data (formerly MTN-Qhubeka) and has also worked with a number of pro riders including Thor Hushvold and Heinrich Haussler as well ▶





How do I find a physio-led bike-fit?

Ian Blackburn and Phil Burt agree that word of mouth can be the best way to find a proficient physio-led bike-fit.

"It's not a perfect situation," says Burt, "because a lot of finding a good one is about trial and error. The hi-tech tools are very good these days but the real skill of bike-fit is being able to interpret the numbers. It's all about the person who's actually doing the fit and personal recommendation from someone who's actually experienced the service counts for a lot."

Blackburn (pictured above with One Pro's Pete Williams) agrees: "I don't think that your Joe Average physio is clued-up enough to provide the complete package. I would always look to someone who has historically worked with cyclists across a broad range of abilities so they understand the demands of the sport. I would also say that it's really helpful if the physio is a cyclist themselves"

So how do you find a good physio-led bike-fitter? Although not infallible, personal recommendation is probably the best way. Failing that, some bike-fitters are now specifying their physio credentials in their marketing and on their websites.

The best physios are members of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, which helps maintain high standards. And all physiotherapists should be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council. If the therapist is not registered, it's probably a good reason to avoid them. You can check at www.hpc-uk.org.

Some physio-led bike-fits entail separate people doing the bike-fit and any physiotherapy. In principle, there's nothing wrong with this approach but it may be worth considering that one person with a full understanding of the rider's position and physiology may be a neater solution.

as competitive amateurs. Not everyone who consults Blackburn complains of discomfort — but this doesn't always guarantee they are free from issues that need addressing.

"I see people with no real obvious problems and then you get them on the couch and you wonder how they actually manage to turn the pedals," he says.

"On the couch, you can clearly identify precursors that are bound to lead to problems further down the line."

Blackburn sympathises with riders who look to solve problems of pain, discomfort or injury by looking to the bike first. He feels this is a misguided approach that has grown as a consequence of bike-fitting tradition; that is, bike-focused and conducted in a retail environment.

"There is a real temptation to throw money at the problem, and that tends to be directed towards the bike," he says. "There's a tendency to buy new components before looking at addressing biomechanical and physiological issues."

Blackburn and others who champion the physio-led bike-fit point to the one-stop-shop advantages of identifying changes required to the bike and the rider simultaneously. That said, they are quick to remind clients that biomechanical problems in the rider are seldom a quick fix.

Call for industry regulation

"Most of my clients can be set on the right path with a bike-fit and one physio session," says Blackburn. "The more tricky cases might need two physio sessions but we don't ask people to enrol for endless courses involving multiple sessions. It's not a great business model," he says with a smile.

Blackburn also emphasises that "homework" in the form of strength and conditioning exercises is essential, and is prescribed to embed a longer-term solution to biomechanical problems.

Most people want a bike-fit for one of two reasons: to get faster or to solve an injury problem. The latter group are naturally prime candidates for the physio-led approach, but even its proponents concede it can be difficult to find gold-standard practitioners.

"The problem with the bike-fit [market] is that it's a bit like the Wild West — it's unregulated; there are no minimum standards and almost anyone can call themselves a bike-fitter," says Burt. "That needs to change."



A physical assessment is a crucial part of a bike-fit

Basic bike-fit versus physio-led approach

The physio-led type of bike-fit focuses as much on the rider as on the bike, while the more rudimentary type of fit considers only, or principally, the bike.

The physio-led school of thought emphasises that, even though the human body is adaptable, making changes focusing solely on the bike may have potentially serious consequences for the

rider — specifically, where the root of the problem is physiological.

Every human body is slightly different, so there's no simple equation or one-size-fits-all approach to solving problems.

Below we take a look at some of the more serious difficulties that may arise where a basic bike-fit does not consider physiological factors.

Potential Problem	Basic bike-fit	Physio-led approach
Constriction of the iliac artery	If a fitter places a rider in an overly aggressive, low, aero position, the hip angle can become too closed.	A physio-led fit would be more likely to recognise the potential for long-term damage and may persuade the rider to compromise on position.
Leg length discrepancy (LLD)	Surprisingly common, different leg lengths can lead to a host of problems. A basic bike-fit may not pick up LLD, especially if the discrepancy is relatively minor.	A bike-fitter with physio knowledge may be more likely to spot LLD and decide if it is structural (different length bones) or functional (e.g. a twisted pelvis), leading to a more precise solution.
Lower back pain	A basic bike-fit may try to address back pain with a simple tweak, often to saddle height. It can work, but it can also make things worse.	A physio-led bike-fit may be more helpful in diagnosing lower back pain if it has multiple causes and the fitter may be better qualified to refer a rider for specialist advice if it's needed.
Knee pain	Again, a simple tweak to cleat position resulting from a basic bike-fit can be a solution. But, as with back pain, knee pain can have several underlying causes.	Potentially one of the most complex problems to solve for a cyclist, the knee is the area most likely to benefit from a physio-led approach, because of the wide range of variables that can cause knee pain.



**A physio-led approach
helped Young to ride again**

Case study: David Young

“I could barely get into the drops”

When David Young, 55, got the results of a scan on a long-standing back problem, the findings were worrying. He had ruptured discs — the result of a lifting injury sustained at work — and he had a long-term degenerative condition in several other discs. As a lifelong cyclist, he feared the worst.

Young's doctors were also gloomy: “They told me I might not be able to work again, let alone ride a bike. When I went to see the hospital physios, they just didn't seem to understand that cyclists want to keep on cycling. They seemed to give up hope that I could get back to any kind of good level on the bike.”

Young wasn't having that. As an enthusiastic club cyclist who clocks up between 150 and 200 miles a week, he was used to cycling through moderate back pain. An old running injury that resulted in a broken bone in his pelvis putting pressure on his sciatic nerve had also resulted in his having regular physio.

But the scan results drove him to seek out more specialist physio advice. He asked around and heard that Ian Blackburn could offer cycling-specific treatment.

“At the first appointment, he gave me a thorough assessment and said he saw no reason why I couldn't back to decent form,” Young says.

“I had a bike-fit with him and he adjusted a few things. They were all designed at not putting undue strain on the lower back. The changes to the bike didn't feel too much different but over time I definitely noticed a difference in performance.”

Young has a monthly physio appointment and his position on the bike is monitored as part of the treatment. “Ian will make tweaks and changes to the bike from time to time. They are quite small and I don't often notice them. There was one occasion when he moved the saddle back and my glutes were screaming. But after a couple of weeks I'd got used to it and I felt more powerful.”

Young's bike-fit is an ongoing process, and it's a method that Phil Burt endorses: “Finding the optimal position on the bike should be evolutionary, not revolutionary.”

These gradual shifts in position, combined with regular physio treatment, have seen Young make steady progress: “Over two years I've gradually got into a much more aggressive position, lower and more aero. When I first saw Ian, I could barely get into the drops.”

■ Ian Blackburn can be contacted at Elite Physio, Cottingley New Road, Bingley, West Yorkshire, BD16 1TZ or at www.elitephysio.co.uk.

Jake Scott's Diet in a day

An Post-Chain Reaction | Age: 20 | From: Holmfirth



Recent An Post-Chain Reaction signing Jake Scott has been competing in Belgium since 2011, while also regularly winning at national

junior races in the UK. The Yorkshireman ended his 2015 campaign with a win in the Zandhoven criterium.

Having made a name for himself in Belgium, Scott was

signed by Irish-registered An Post-Chain Reaction after he was recommended to DS Kurt Bogaerts by former An Post rider Mark McNally. "The opportunity from

An Post is great and is where I really want to be. A team of this stature is what I've aimed for since a junior," Scott said.

Here he tells *CW* about his diet on a training day.

Breakfast

I have breakfast between 8am and 9am. I like muesli with soya milk. I mix up my breakfast depending on the training day. Porridge with banana, blueberries and nuts is a favourite of mine. I'm also partial to egg and salmon in the morning. Whatever the breakfast, I down it with black coffee.

CW says:

As Scott doesn't load up with carbohydrates when on the bike, a good, high-energy breakfast is vital to keep him going throughout his ride.

469
kcalories
80.5g
carbohydrates
21.3g
protein
9g
fat



Ride snacks

When I'm out riding, I don't eat a lot. I might have a Grainsy bar, which is a seed and oat muesli bar. It's cheap and cheerful. If I'm out for five hours, I'll have a banana too.

CW says:

Alternating between sport energy bars and natural food is not only good for the body in terms of digestion, but it can be more appetising too — avoiding the monotony of energy drinks, bars and gels.



487.6
kcalories
98.4g
carbohydrates
7g
protein
7.8g
fat

Guilty pleasure

I don't really have one. I would say it is dark chocolate, but that's not really that bad for you. I like peanut butter too. Obviously, at Christmas things went out the window a little bit but I'm quite disciplined and I have to be this time of year. A cake or a pancake once a week at most.

CW says:

Out of all the guilty pleasures available, Scott's are pretty tame. He sticks to a fairly strict diet, and the occasional piece of dark chocolate won't scupper that — and high-cocoa types have reported health benefits including lowering blood pressure and cholesterol.

Lunch

I'm usually back mid-afternoon from a ride and I'll have a salad with all sorts: lettuce, tomatoes, carrot, sweetcorn, peppers, onion. I'll then also have some protein: either eggs, tuna or mozzarella cheese. Drinks-wise, I tend to just drink water all of the day. If I go to the cafe in the afternoon, I might have one or two black coffees.

CW says:

Finding a balance between replacing energy stores and over-consuming can be tricky. Scott keeps his lunch light while ensuring that he gets plenty of protein to help repair and rebuild his muscles which may have been fatigued out on the ride.



483
kcalories
27.8g
carbohydrates
65.2g
protein
13.8g
fat



Dinner

Dinner varies from night to night but usually consists of some vegetables with either meat or fish. For example, spaghetti bolognese with the tomato sauce supplemented with peppers, carrots and peas.

CW says:

As Scott limits his carbohydrate intake throughout the day, topping up energy stores with spaghetti provides carbohydrate for the following day. The addition of other vegetables into the bolognese sauce also boosts the body's defences with its high anti-oxidant content.

895
kcalories
179.5g
carbohydrates
31g
protein
3.5g
fat

Evening

I'm usually quite good and don't eat at night but if I do I'll have a natural soya yoghurt or some fruit and nuts. I eat a lot of mango.

199
kcalories
28.9g
carbohydrates
9.4g
protein
5.2g
fat

CW says:

Having a snack in the evening isn't recommended but low-calorie fruit and soya yoghurt, which contain healthy fats, vitamins and minerals, is a perfect post-dinner snack.



DAILY
INTAKE
2,533.6
kcalories
415.1g
carbohydrates
133.9g
protein
39.3g
fat



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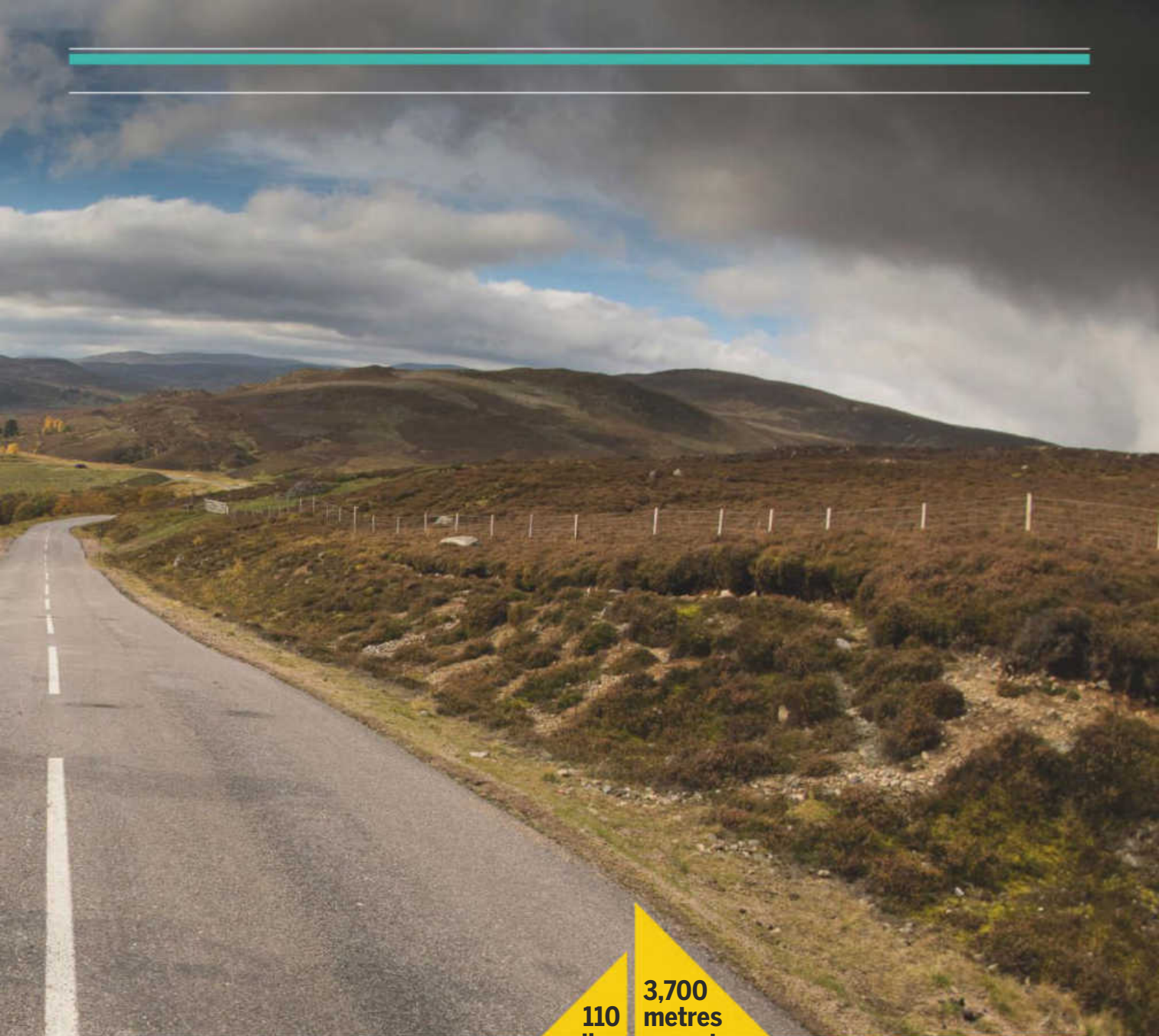


A full-page background image showing two cyclists riding uphill on a paved road. The cyclist in the foreground is wearing a red and white jersey and black shorts. The cyclist further ahead is wearing a blue and white jersey. The landscape is a valley with rolling hills, some green fields, and patches of trees with autumn-colored foliage. In the background, a large, dark mountain rises under a sky filled with white and grey clouds. The overall scene is one of a challenging mountain climb.

CW
Difficulty
rating:
9/10

**This
year's
event:
May 21**

King of the Mountains



**110
miles**

**3,700
metres
ascent**

Test your mid-season mettle amid charming Highland terrain

Billy Connolly famously once said there are only two weather seasons in Scotland: winter and July. Anyone entering this sportive should heed his advice. Last year's event had to be re-routed at short notice after 50mph winds were forecast for the mountaintops. Several years earlier, there were dozens of DNFs after unexpected snow and hailstones. You have been warned...

But if you believe there's no such thing as bad weather, only poor clothing, then you are certainly in for an unforgettable adventure.

Where is it?

In the heart of rural Aberdeenshire, north-east Scotland, starting and finishing in the village of Aboyne. It's a beautiful, sparsely populated area, popular with walkers, fisherman, hunters, whisky lovers and US tourists who love the fairytale-style castles and Royal connections.

Why ride it?

There are few UK sportives that offer such a serious challenge in such glorious surroundings. The biggest climb takes you up to the Lecht ski station, while the flatter sections take you alongside Scotland's most famous and picturesque rivers, the Dee and the Don.

History

The first KoM Sportive was organised in 2008 by Alastair Brodie and Sandy Lindsay, members of Deeside Thistle CC, who had previously run the Great Inverurie Bike Ride from 1987 to raise funds for a children's cancer charity. The event was given a high-tech makeover last year when Firetrail Events introduced a new, user-friendly website.

How to enter

Entry fee is £37, plus booking fee. Enter online at: www.kornsportive.co.uk

Get to the start

By road, allow four hours from Glasgow or Edinburgh. The nearest railway station and airport are at Aberdeen, a 50-minute drive from the event HQ.

Where to stay

The Huntly Arms Hotel and Glendavan House that overlooks Loch Davan are both in the HQ village. For luxury, we can recommend Kildrummy Castle Hotel (40min drive from start) where the wood-panelled bar and drawing room overlook beautiful gardens and the ruins of the eponymous 13th century castle. French owner Claude Berquier is a big fan of Bernard Hinault.

Where to eat

The restaurant at Kildrummy Castle Hotel serves excellent but pricey French cuisine. A good alternative is Alford Bistro in Alford, which has a great dessert trolley. The Boat Inn, Aboyne, does some good gastro pub grub or there's The Royal Kashmir Tandoori.

Local bike shops

Cycle Highlands and Bike Station are both in Ballater.



The likes of the Fred Whitton Challenge may also be prone to the elements, but the mountains here are bigger and the route much more remote.

A brand new HQ for this year's edition, starting from Aboyne, adds a few miles onto previous editions, making it an impressive 110 miles to conquer. Before you know it you'll be passing the fairytale pink turrets of Craigievar Castle and pushing towards the 396-metre-high climb of the Suie. Halfway down the 12 per cent slopes on the other side, watch out for a treacherous 90-degree left-hander — it took us, with brakes screeching, by surprise.

The next challenge comes after passing through the handsome little village of Rhynie. The road lurches up towards the distinctive, cone-shaped Hill of Noth (to your right) and pretty much stays at that trajectory for the next 10 miles. This is the Cabrach, a desolate landscape of abandoned farmhouses and glowering skies.

By the time you have crossed the River Deveron and passed the Grouse Inn — boasting one of the largest single malt whisky collections in Scotland, should you need a pick-me-up — you have completed the toughest section of the climb. Cheers! Once over the next crest, it's largely all downhill into Dufftown, the "Malt Whisky Capital of the World".

From the town's distinctive clock tower, you're in for a long, straight haul at a constant four per cent gradient back into the rolling

countryside. The road is gently undulating for the next dozen or so miles to the remote Highland village of Tomintoul. This is your chance to recover and prepare for the big one...

During the six miles from Tomintoul to the Lecht Ski Station, a road that rises from 345 to 644 metres in elevation met us; the Lecht is one of the highest paved roads in the UK. The gradient is largely manageable, but inevitably packs a punch near the end, when you will encounter a cruel slab of 20 per cent before it slackens off to 10-15 per cent for the final half a mile. Though this is the highest point of the route, it's important you still conserve some energy as you have nearly 40 miles to go with another sadistic climb between here and the finish.

That climb is Gairnshiel, an ascent of 220 metres in less than two miles. Like most Scottish climbs, it's pointless quoting an average gradient as the road bucks and jerks upwards inconsistently, making it hard to find a rhythm. But providing you paced yourself up the Lecht, it's manageable. Take care

on the way down to the impressive stone-arched Gairnshiel Bridge as there is one section of descent — 22 per cent — where the road seems to tumble over the edge of a cliff.

From the bridge, it's a lovely, gentle downhill into Ballater, followed by a thankfully brief stretch along the busiest road in the area, the A93, before starting the relatively easy stretch back to Aboyne.

TARGET TIMES

Distance	Ave speed	Time
62miles	12mph	5hr 10min
62miles	15mph	4hr 8min
62miles	18mph	3hr 27min
110miles	12mph	9hr 10min
110miles	15mph	7hr 18min
110miles	18mph	6hr 7min

The challenges

1 Queens View

With an average gradient of just three per cent, this is a nice long (3.4 miles) gradual climb to warm your legs up before the assault of the Suie.

2 The Suie

This is a stiff little leg-tester. You'll see the road ramping up in front of you and disappearing into a forest. About three miles in length, the first two are gradual and shallow, but as you enter the forest it kicks up to 10 per cent.

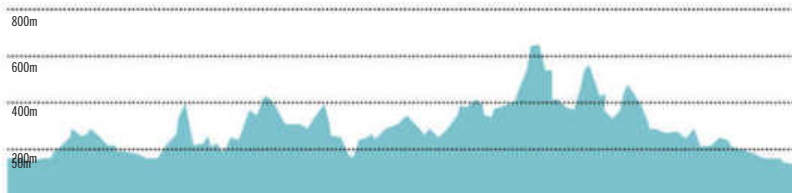
3 Gairnshiel

Once you've turned right towards Ballater, brace yourself. The climb starts after the second bridge and is a 15 per cent leg grinder for the first section. But once you're through the left-hand hairpin, it slackens off.

NAIL IT

4 The Lecht

With over three hours of hard riding already in your legs, you arrive at the foot of the climb to the ski station of the Lecht. The run up to it from Tomintoul is relatively benign, so use these few miles to recover from your earlier exertions. Also, take heart from the fact that you're approaching the mountain from its 'easier' side — though there's still a brute of a 20 per cent ramp halfway up. There's also not much in the way of views to take your mind off things as the road snakes between steep embankments. But the views going down the other side make it all worthwhile (watch out for the really steep bit at the bottom).



Thanet Road Club

Christopher Hovenden explores the east Kent lanes with this well-established, fast growing club

To say Thanet RC has risen Phoenix-like from the ashes may be stretching the truth, but the club based on the east Kent coast has undoubtedly experienced a dramatic transformation in recent years.

"When I joined the club in 1992 it was predominantly 40-year-old time triallists, and even in 2008 we had no youth section. Now we have nine [British Cycling] level-two coaches and over 70 members under 16," says head coach and Go-Ride coordinator Colin Robinson.

The club's fortunes began to change when Robinson's eldest son was inspired by the Great Britain cycling team's

success at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Due to a lack of local youth road racing opportunities, Robinson decided to contact British Cycling and ultimately set up Thanet RC as a Go-Ride club later that year.

Room for all

Seven years on and proof of the club's rapid growth is illustrated by a large group of riders gathered at a bus stop in St Nicholas-at-Wade on a cold winter's morning.

"The Sunday run is the backbone of the club. We used to have only one group, but now we regularly get up to 60 riders across three groups," says Brett Dennis, Thanet's president and club run leader.

"It's really cradle to grave now; the club caters for toddlers to pensioners."

To accommodate the range of abilities, three groups ride slightly different routes (40 miles to 55 miles) at speeds between 15mph and 19mph, all converging at the Adelaide Farm Cafe for a bite to eat.

The fast group goes as far afield as Dover and while rolling along the flat lanes between Plucks Gutter and Preston, Rob Milnes explains why there are two versions of yellow and red club kit on show: "We're all very much one club, but in 2013 we set up a race team. We wanted to give the junior and senior riders support to go as far as they can in racing."

Lawrence Martin, whose son is a member of the race team, supports this sentiment: "The club isn't elitist at all... I ride! But it also provides avenues to excel."

With a hairpin bend, and set behind the iconic white cliffs of Dover, the ascent of Langdon Hill is the ride's toughest and most picturesque challenge. However, it is a lot easier

Club facts

From: Thanet (Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs), but also attracts members from Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay.

Members: 238

Formed: 1947

Meets: Saturday Go-Ride sessions at the Betteshanger Country Park; Sunday at 9am, three group rides from the St Nicholas-at-Wade bus stop; members that are retired or work shifts ride midweek; monthly club nights at St Nicholas-at-Wade cricket club and a summer 10-mile time trial series.

when two of the race team's rising stars, Oliver Robinson and Daniel Martin, are sat on the front, blocking the wind.

Great camaraderie

After cresting the not insignificant climb, and as we enjoy the rolling roads towards the welcome refuelling stop, Robinson and Martin explain the benefits of being part of the race team: "There's loads of encouragement and camaraderie at races — we really push each other on."

In addition to having

History

Thanet RC was formed in 1947 by a group of 12 young members from the local CTC division who wanted something a bit more race-oriented. Time trialling was a popular discipline for the club from the outset and, throughout its near 70-year history, the club's predominantly yellow and red kits — save for when a communication error meant that the jersey modelled on the professional PDM cycling team from the 1980s had a green rather than yellow flash — have been ridden over all distances, from hill-climbs to 12-hour races.

Thanet RC's fortunes were boosted by the conversion of the

former Betteshanger Colliery into a closed road circuit in 2007, and by its becoming a Go-Ride club in 2008. The youth section grew rapidly and led to the creation of a youth development squad in 2012 and a race team a year later; a surprise consequence was the number of parents who have followed their children in joining the club.

Now, in addition to time trialling, many members regularly take part in mtb, cyclo-cross, road racing and racing on the track at the Olympic Velodrome.

Achievements

■ The club is the current South

East Go-Ride club champion.

■ Keith Ratcliff won the 1974 Grand Prix of Essex, a prestigious international race at the time, by beating Jan Raas (1979 world road race champion) in the final sprint.

■ Callum Gough was third in the National Hill-climb Championships in 1981.

■ Oliver Robinson in 2015 won the South East youth TT championships, was second in the South East youth road and third in the South East youth track championships.

■ Sebastian Dickson came second in the 2015 National University 10-mile TT Championship and

simultaneously broke the club 10-mile TT record.

■ Daniel Martin won both the Junior Kent CA BAR and Kent 10-mile TT junior championship in 2015. He was also the South East representative on the National Youth Forum.





Thanet Road Club

Ride highlights

1 Plucks Gutter to Preston

The quiet winding country roads running from Plucks Gutter to Preston are what the Kent countryside is all about. It is a joy to roll along the flat roads surrounded by farmers' fields.

2 Griffin Hill to Mill Top

The tree-covered hill's steady gradient can be ridden seated but will have you breathing heavily by the time you reach the top.

3 White cliffs of Dover

Langdon Hill rewards you with a beautiful view across to St Margaret's. Just hope there is a kind south-westerly breeze coming off the English Channel rather than a block headwind.

Favourite cafe

The Adelaide Farm Cafe is located on the A258 just down the road from the closed road race circuit at Betteshanger Country Park. It has been a favourite for local riders on and off for many years and it is clear to see why. There is plenty of seating and space outside to store bikes, the food is good (including fantastic fry-ups) and the staff are friendly. With copious parking and good road links you could be encouraged to pay a visit without your bike.

Adelaide Farm Cafe, Sandwich Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 0AT.
01304 620158





These days Thanet RC is a club for all the family

Meet the club



Colin Inett: "I've some great friends. I don't know what I'd do without the club."



Lance Childs: "I like racing on the track and the road. Everyone here is friendly."



Cafe chat is always lively and inclusive



Don't touch the chain! Clean hands on display



Jim Dickson: "There's a great support network, which really helped my son Seb get into cycling."

regular racers in its ranks, the club hosts a variety of races and social events.

"This season we hosted 58 events, which involved 300 club volunteers, and I marshalled nearly all the events at Betteshanger Country Park [a closed road circuit]," says 'super marshal' and women's representative Teresa Childs. "We also have lots of events and trips

— the monthly social at the cricket club, the summer barbecue, plus trips to Herne Hill and Paris-Roubaix."

By the time the fast group reaches the cafe it's bustling with Thanet members both young and old. "Us old boys like to pass on a few tips to the youngsters," says the affable Andrew McCall, who along with Dave Mastin and Colin Inett have clocked up more

than 70 years of Thanet membership. Their advice is not limited to training either, with Mastin recalling the unofficial club motto of 'don't touch the chain!', referring to always keeping your hands clean. The growing number of members means there is a constant queue of riders waiting to take notes.

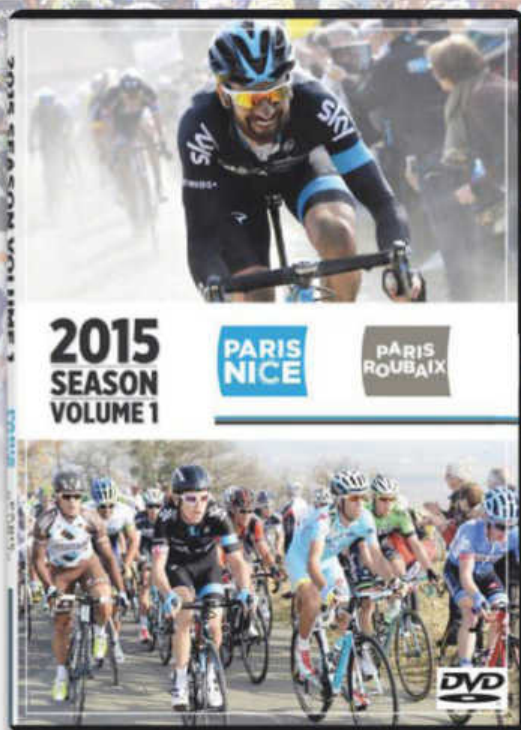


Madeleine Bazin: "The social side is great. There's a really nice family feeling."

Contact www.thanetrc.org | email: thanetrcsec@jped.co.uk | Telephone: Jim Dickson 01227 283816

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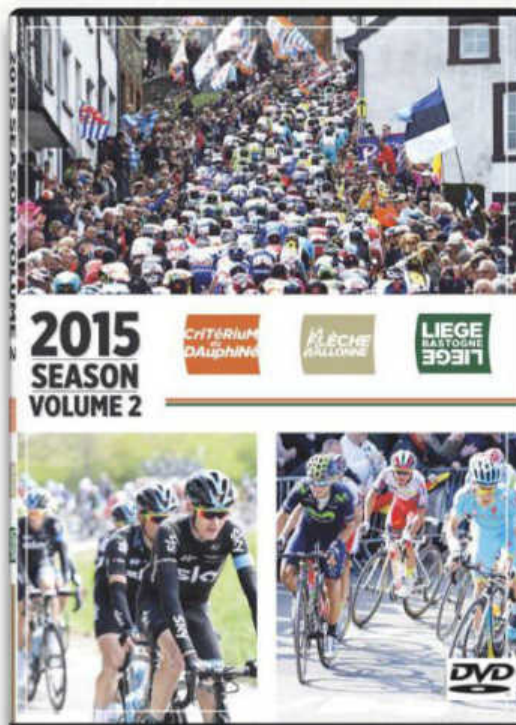


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Gold Hill

Shaftesbury, Dorset

Simon Warren

Ah, Gold Hill, the picture-perfect British scene, its cobbles worn smooth by the feet of countless tourists all here to snap a picture of Dorset's national treasure. And of course, apart from gracing a million postcards it was also the location for Ridley Scott's *Hovis* advert. The image of the young boy pushing his baker's bike up its impossibly steep cobbles is famous round the world. Impossibly steep back in 1973 maybe, but that was before the compact was invented — right?

Attempt your climb early in the morning

before too many souvenir hunters arrive, or you'll have more than just the gradient and surface to deal with.

Leave St James's Street at the base and carry speed from the smooth tarmac onto the stones that start about halfway up. There's no uniformity and you'll be constantly searching for the best line while

CW
Difficulty
rating:
7/10

trying to keep on top of your gear. Every 10 metres or so there's a pronounced ridge that hits your front wheel

like a hammer, slowing your progress towards the small square at the summit, where onlookers will have been tracking your progress, ensuring you can't get off and walk.

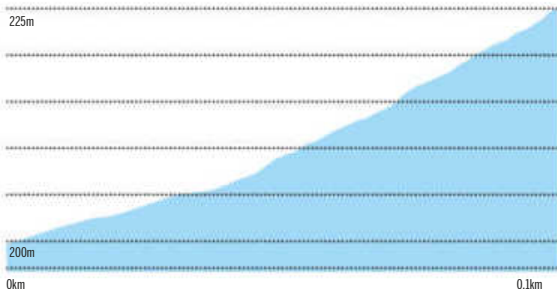
The stats

WHERE From the west find St James's Street and from the east find Layton Lane. They meet at the bottom where you turn north to climb.



KOM Top Tip Search for the cleanest line and avoid tourists.

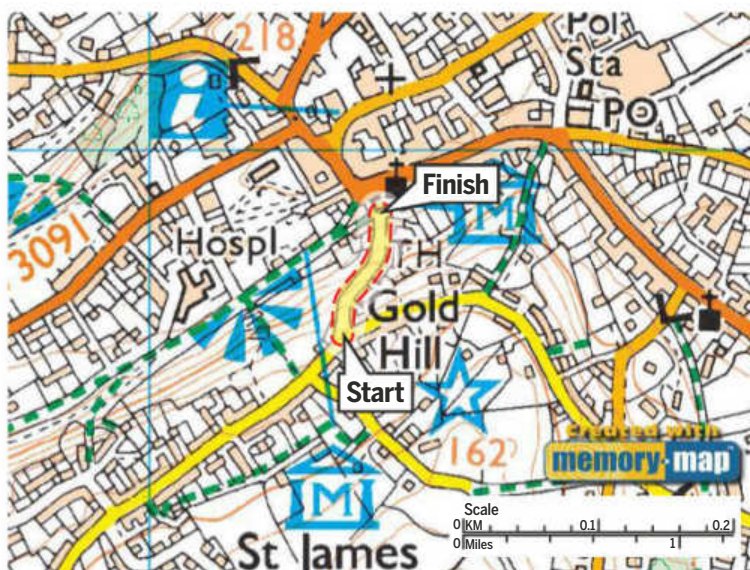
150m	225m	26m	16%	20%
Length	Summit height	Height gain	Average gradient	Max gradient



Strava file: www.strava.com/segments/689528



Photo: Jesse Wild



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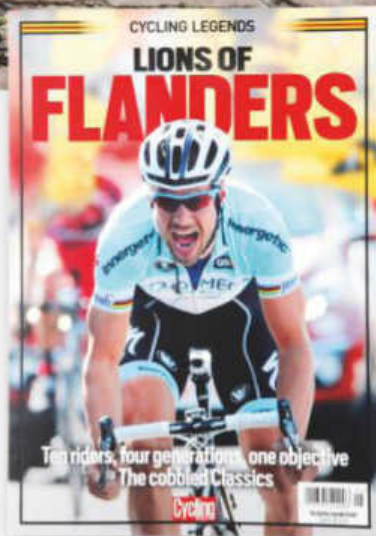
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FOUR GENERATIONS
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Harris gets a break

Broken chain scuppers Wyman's dash to the line

Ben Goddard/Snowdon Sports

Nikki Harris (Boels-Dolmans) capitalised on rival Helen Wyman's misfortune to take her second senior National Cyclo-Cross Championship title in Shrewsbury on Sunday.

The eagerly awaited battle between the pair, ranked second and seventh in the world respectively, was decided late on when the mud-covered course at the Shrewsbury Sports Village had the final say on the destination of the title.

Thirty-four-year-old Wyman (Kona FSA) looked to have pulled out a vital margin over her rival in the final section, before a mechanical problem left her sliding into a bush and gave Harris the gap she needed to clinch the national jersey.

"I'm so happy! It was a close race but I felt better every lap and it was one of those courses where I got stronger as the race went on," said Harris, who previously won the title in 2013.

The race had looked set for a very different outcome after the opening exchanges as nine-time national champion Wyman gapped her rival on the first lap, using her running strength to pull out a 22-second lead.

However, as the race wore on, European bronze medallist Harris came back at her rival to set up a grandstand finish in front of a huge crowd.

Harris wasn't without her own mechanical problems, though. "On the last lap my chain came

off, so through the wooded section I went flat out," she said. It gave Wyman a seemingly-decisive advantage coming into the final corners.

But on a short off-camber climb, the reigning champion's chain came off, forcing her to slide into a nearby hedge and leaving Harris to gratefully retake the lead.

By the time Wyman had got her bike working, the victory had gone and Harris had time to enjoy the win. Wyman finished 55 seconds behind.

Harris added: "Luckily Helen also had a bit of a mechanical so it all came down to the end which was good for the spectators."

Wyman was left ruing her misfortune, saying: "It was hugely disappointing as I had an eight-second gap and I knew I was better on the running sections so the last section was never going to be a problem.

"We are racing against each other and against the best in the world every week and we're doing a good job representing the country so it's no shame for another person to get the jersey.

"But when you pretty much feel like you've got it in the bag with a quarter of a lap to go and something like that happens that's not your fault it is hugely disappointing."

Behind the battle for the win, Delia Beddis (Vicious Velo) took a clear third place, finishing some five minutes behind Harris.



Killeen takes maiden victory

Liam Killeen (Specialized Racing) conquered the Shrewsbury mud to clinch his maiden senior cyclo-cross title, beating Ian Field (Hargroves Cycles) into second by 43 seconds.

Best known for his mountain bike exploits, the 33-year-old former Commonwealth champion was locked in battle with Field, winner of the last four British cross titles, before making his move halfway through the race and riding to a comfortable win.

"It all worked out once I got back on the bike from the running sections," said Killeen. "This means a lot as I really smashed my ankle up in 2012 which is still not good, so

to have that kind of race today was really good for my confidence."

Field admitted that he was deservedly beaten, saying: "I wanted to win but that's bike racing. I lost to someone who finished fifth at the Olympics so he's no mug," explained Field.

"The World Championships is in three weeks on one of the fastest courses in the world [in Zolder, Belgium], so I've been doing a lot of motor pacing with that in mind. I came here today and it was just a slog in mud."

Behind Killeen and Field was Jack Clarkson (Hope Factory Racing), who initially chased the leaders

before falling away and taking a clear third place.

Iain Paton (100% ME) rode to the under-23 title despite being run close by Ben Wadey (Clee Cycles). Nick Barnes (Hargroves Cycles) led initially before getting tangled in a technical wooded section and falling away into third.

Local rider Wadey — who didn't own a cross bike before the start of the season and was in his first national race — came from mid-field to pass Barnes and finish just 14 seconds short of the title.

Paton said: "I just cracked on. Wadey was coming fast up to me so I was just happy to cross the line."

2004

The last year Helen Wyman did not finish on the National Championships podium

7

Number of riders who finished on the same lap as Nikki Harris in the women's event

5

Number of second places taken by Liam Killeen in the National Cross Champs

4-13.9

Time gap between winner Emile Alexander and runner-up Freddy Birchill in the under-14 boys race

14s

The weekend's smallest winning margin, from the under-23 men's race



The rest of the best

British Cycling Olympic Academy mtb rider Evie Richards took a clear win to claim the inaugural under-23 women's crown, a race that National Trophy series winner Hannah Payton missed through injury. Beth Crumpton (Boot Out Breast Cancer CC) and Sophie Wright (Renvale RT) completed the podium.

Mark Donovan (Beacon Wheelers) pulled out a 20-second winning margin to clinch a hotly-contested junior title, ahead of Hargroves's Harry Yates.

Star of day one was 15-year-old Megan James (Abergavenny RC) who was a shock winner in the under-16 girls' race, while favourite Ava Oxley-Szilagyi (VCUK) won the under-14s.

Ben Tulett (Beeline-Gener8) took an emphatic win in the under-16 boys' race, while Emile Alexander (Lichfield City CC) was victorious in the under-14's race in similar style.

Townsend asserts his authority

Reigning British university road race champion Rory Townsend (Pedal Heaven RT) opened his account for the year with a comprehensive win at the Imperial Winter Series at Hillingdon on Saturday.

"I rolled off after about 100 metres, picked up the pace and just drifted away — the legs were good," Townsend said with understatement, having lapped the bunch. Meanwhile Jo Skelton (Look Mum No Hands!) took second, while the promoting club's Tim O'Rourke won the third-cat race.

Elsewhere, at the Lee Valley VeloPark circuit Ian Robins (Cycleworks) finally hit the top step of the podium after a string of top 10s when he won round nine of the Full Gas Winter Series.

He edged James Lowden (Team ASL360) into second place, while Suzetta Guerrini (VeloSport) continued her stranglehold on the women's series, making it an impressive three wins out of four.

At round three of the Odd Down Winter Series in Bath, Liam Bromley (University of Bath CC) took a fine solo

win in an event promoted by Radeon Bike-Science.

Youth triumphed over experience at the East London Velo Series in Redbridge, where 16-year-old Anthony Anderson (Team Corley Cycles) crossed the line ahead of 17-year-old James Jenkins. Rounding off the podium at a sprightly 36 — and more than twice their combined ages — was Paul Hart of Southend Wheelers.

In North Yorkshire, damp but mild conditions and the absence of the usual caustic wind led to aggressive racing from the gun at the Croft Circuit near Darlington.

Second-cat Richie Allen (Planet X-Northside Cycling) took the honours in a sprint finish from elite category team-mate Jack Rees.

The new Planet X team showed their strength with four riders in the top 10. Andrew Ashton (Albarosa CC) rounded out the podium places. Stephen Lewis (Rock 2 Roll) came out on top in a full-blooded sprint finish to the fourth-category race, while Sophie Enever (Speedflex RT) took the chequered flag in the women's race.



Ben Tulett took the U16 National cross title

Under-16 boys: Ben Tulett (Beeline-Gener8)
Under-14 boys: Emile Alexander (Lichfield City CC)
Under-16 girls: Megan James (Abergavenny RC)
Under-14 girls: Ava Oxley-Szilagyi (PH-MAS VCUK Women's CT)

Eastern League (overall, after round 17):

Seniors: 1. Matt Holmes (Arctic Tacx RT) 1072; 2. G. Martin (XRT - Elmy Cycles) 1057; 3. R. Tricker (VICIOUS VELO) 998; 4. J. Madgwick (Hackney GT) 978; 5. R. Milton (Hackney GT) 849; 6. F. Bernasconi (Hackney GT) 818; 7. T. Doe (VC Norwich) 784; 8. G. Steven (Cambridge Tri) 760; 9. M. Grees (North Road CC) 734; 10. M. Smith (Colchester Rovers CC) 723.
Juniors: 1. Dougal Toms (Iceni Velo) 1100; 2. M. Parry (Welwyn Wheelers CC) 1034; 3. K. Jarvis (St Ives CC) 1014.
Women: 1. Katie Scotter (Iceni Velo) 1026.8; 2. L. Foley (Cambridge CC) 1010; 3. S. Chastell (M and D Cycles) 990.
Veteran 40-49: 1. Shaun Aldous (Renvale RT) 1094; 2. M. Mooney (CC Hackney) 1022; 3. R. Maidment (East London Velo) 936.
Veteran women: 1. Jackie Field (CC Ashwell) 1100; 2. J. Newstead (XRT-Elmy Cycles) 1058; 3. E. Tribley (Chelmer CC) 1014.
Veteran 50+: 1. Richard Muchmore (Renvale RT) 1100; 2. D. Copland (Ipswich BC) 1038; 3. C. Harrison (Ford CC) 983.
Under-16 boys: 1. William Raymond (Welwyn Wheelers CC) 1090; 2. O. Stockwell (Welwyn Wheelers CC) 998; 3. N. Field (CC Ashwell) 974.
Under-16 girls: 1. Elspeth Grace (Welwyn Wheelers CC) 1099; 4. L. Higham (Welwyn Wheelers CC) 1003; 3. H Pell (CC Ashwell) 1002.

Welsh League (Final overall):

Seniors: 1. Jonathan Pugh (The Bulls) 344; 2. J. Phelps (Muddybumbikes) 342; 3. L. Hobbs (Forza Cycles) 340; 4. P. Morris (Dambusters) 311; 5. A. Peall (Forza Cycles) 311; 6. D. Jarrom (Cardiff Ajax) 302; 7. D. Powell (Castle Bikes) 298; 8. C. Roberts (Hafren CC) 295; 9. C. Seaman (Urban Cyclery) 293; 10. G. Lewis (Pedal Heaven) 283.
Veterans: 1. Andrew Parry (Urban Cyclery) 349; 2. M. Beckett (Cardiff JIF) 343; 3. M. James (Jewsons/Polypipe) 342.
Women: 1. Clare Hoskins (Cardiff JIF) 132; 2. M. Backstedt (Maidy Flyers) 126; 3. Ffion James (Abergavenny RC) 120.
Under-16 Boys: 1. Owain Roberts (Towy Riders) 140; 2. S. Beckett (Cardiff JIF) 135; 3. D. Sharratt (Pembrokeshire) 122.
Under-16 Girls: 1. Elynor Backstedt (Maidy Flyers) 137; 2. K. Hesden (Coedy Brenin) 132; 3. M. James (Abergavenny RC) 120.

Snowdon Sports supply domestic results and reports to Cycling Weekly. Please send your information to results@snowdons.co.uk or call 0114 232 5555 and we will do our best to include them in our expanded racing section.

Road racing

Saturday, January 9

East London Velo Winter Series race 1 (Redbridge Cycle Circuit, Essex):

2, 3, 4: 1. Anthony Anderson (Team Corley Cycles); 2. J. Jenkins (Southend Wheelers); 3. P. Hart (Southend Wheelers); 4. T. Easley (Team ASL360); 5. T. Torrie (Lee Valley Youth CC); 6. J. Freeman (Dulwich Paragon CC); 7. C. Peck (Chelmer CC); 8. L. Delicact (London Phoenix CC); 9. J. Hill (Preston Park Youth CC); 10. Benjamin Allen (Westerley CC).
4th Cat: Timothy Chilvers (Essex Roads CC)

Full Gas Winter Circuit Series round 9 (Lee Valley Circuit, London):

E, 1, 2, 3: 1. Ian Robins (Cycleworks.co.uk); 2. J. Lowden (Team ASL360); 3. J. Vaughan (VC Londres); 4. J. Brougham (London Dynamo); 5. C. Barnett (WyndyMilla); 6. F. Pett (Strada-Sport); 7. K. Strugnell (Kassei.CC); 8. F. Horrocks (RP Vision RT); 9. Nick Broome (Dulwich Paragon CC); 10. D. Demishev (NLTCBMB).
4th Cat: Adam Swan (Cycle Club Ashwell).
Women: Suzetta Guerrini (VeloSport)

Velo29 Winter Series (Croft Circuit, Darlington):

E, 1, 2, 3, 4: 1. Richie Allen (Planet X-Northside Cycling); 2. J. Rees (Planet X-Northside Cycling); 3. A. Ashton (Albarosa CC) 4. B. Hewitt (Scarborough RC); 5. S. Neilson (Fietzen Tempo); 6. G. Martin (Spokes RT); 7. L. Ridden (Cestria CC); 8. J. Ward (Knottingley Velo); 9. J. Saunders (Planet X - Northside Cycling); 10. D. Coombe (Planet X - Northside Cycling).
4th Cat: Stephen Lewis (Rock 2 Roll)
Women: Sophie Enever (Speedflex RT)

Odd Down Winter Series race 3 (Odd Down Circuit, Bath):

2, 3: 1. Liam Bromley (University of Bath CC); 2. G. Turner (Performance Cycles); 3. D. Gough (Swansea University); 4. S. Barnett (VC Walcot); 5. Paul Hayward (Cwmcarn Paragon); 6. W. Page (unattached); 7. E. Lassiter (Cotswold Veldriden); 8. T. Smith (Cotswold Veldriden); 9. T. Webb (VC Venta); 10. T. Bowring (Ride 24/7).
4th Cat: Will Swarbrick (University of Bath CC)
Women: Nicki Carr (VC Equipe Flix)

Cyclo-cross

Saturday-Sunday, January 9-10 National Cyclo-Cross Championships (Shrewsbury, Shropshire):

Elite Men: 1. Liam Killeen (Specialized Racing) 1:05.06; 2. I. Field (Hargroves Cycles - Ridley RT) +0.44; 3. J. Clarkson (Hope Factory Racing) +1.36; 4. N. Craig (Scott Racing) +1.56; 5. G. Drake (Leisure Lakes Bikes) +2.19; 6. P. Oldham (Hope Factory Racing) +2.45; 7. G. Ferguson (Betch.NL Superior-Brentjens) +3.17; 8. A. Paton (Pedal Heaven RT) +4.01; 9. D. Fletcher (Pines Cycles-Felt) +4.26; 10. D. Booth (Hope Factory Racing) +4.32.
Elite women: 1. Nikki Harris (Boels Dolmans CT) 49:49.02; 2. H. Wyman (Kona/FSA Factory Team) +0.55; 3. D. Beddis (Vicious Velo) +5.18; 4. D. Lee (Cannondale Girls) +7.52; 5. A. Simpson (Hope Factory Racing) +9.58; 6. C. Beaumont (Vicious

Velo) +13.01; 7. F. Dannah (unattached) +15.58; 8. R. Miller (Hargroves Cycles - Ridley RT) +1 lap; 9. R. Richardson (Hafren CC) +1 lap; 10. S. Barber (North Hampshire RC) +1 lap.
Under-23 men: 1. Iain Paton (100%ME) 51.50; 2. B. Wade (Clee Cycles) +0.14; 3. N. Barnes (Hargroves Cycles-Ridley RT) +1.25.
Under-23 women: 1. Evie Richards (T-Mo Racing) 37.22; 2. B. Crumpton (Boot Out Breast Cancer CC) +1.52; 3. S. Wright (Renvale RT) +2.08.
Junior men: 1. Mark Donovan (Beacon Wheelers) 45.13; 2. H. Yates (Hargroves Cycles) +0.21; 3. W. Gascoyne (Pines Cycles - Felt) +0.56.
Veteran men 40-49: 1. Nick Craig (Scott Racing) 40.51; 2. R. Jebb (Hope Factory Racing) +0.16; 3. I. Taylor (C and N Cycles RT) +1.20.
Veteran men over-50: 1. Tim Gould (Zepnat RT-Lazer Helmets) 42.03; 2. C. Young (Pedalsport CC) +0.16; 3. G. Johnson (Sunset Cycles) +0.53.
Veteran women: 1. Maddi Smith (Bolsover & District CC) 49.57; 2. N. Davies (Beacon Wheelers) +2.39; H. Pattinson (Solent Pirates) +2.39.

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USED CYCLES



TREK MADONE 5.2 - 50 CM CARBON FRAME This is a lovely, well maintained TREK Madone purchased from the Bicycle Chain in 2012 (I still have the receipt). It has been re-cabled and fitted with a lovely £125 Fi'zik Arione F3 saddle. It also has a new Dura Ace back cassette. The wheels are actually brand new - see photo of the Fulcrum Wheels and also complete with new Continental Grand Sport tyres. This bike will suit someone who is 5' 3 to 5' 8. The bike has been rode as a summer weekend bike - so around 40 miles per week and the occasional event. I am selling as I have recently purchased a stainless steel racing bike but would happily keep this bike if I had the space. I would suggest that you collect (Taunton, Somerset) but a courier could be organised. This has not been priced into the deal. £785. Taunton. Tel: 07786 171242. Email: neil.bailey2000@gmail.com 14/1



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Dr Hutch

It's the rainy season, so don't expect to see the Doc out on his bike

doctorhutch_cycling@timeinc.com



As I sit writing this column it is raining outside. The rain is, in fact, why I've chosen to do the column right now. I was going to go for a ride, then it started raining. So I decided I wouldn't bother with the ride. Instead I would do it later when the rain had stopped, and when the road had dried off a little. I knew I would enjoy it more then.

This will drive a certain sort of cycling moral absolutist into a fury. I can almost hear them barking, "Get out in the rain, you ninny!" into their Eccles cakes. "Be a man. Do you think you're going to bloody dissolve?" "Your skin's waterproof." "I remember in the winter of '63 doing five hours in freezing sleet and loving every minute."

All of the above has been addressed to me at some point, generally at a bike race HQ where the wind is driving the rain against

the windows with a venom that would make a lighthouse keeper wonder if perhaps it was time to let the cat in. Usually I had done nothing more than observe that it was "a bit damp out there", probably after seeing a triathlete showing off by front crawling across a puddle in the car park. I do not care. I will not be cowed.

I've done my share of riding in the rain. There have been plenty of races where it was unavoidable, and training camps where a desperate desire to please a coach got me out the door. A few winters ago I even decided that I was going to train in the rain until I just damn well learned to like it. I did 35 hours in the rain one week that January — 45 hours, if you count cleaning the bike afterwards. I lovingly carried so much mud home and hosed it off that by the time spring came I had to get Tony Robinson and the *Time Team* crew round to help me look for the garden.

I even started to believe that old lie, "There's no such thing as bad weather, just the wrong clothes." This is just a modern variant on "Your skin's waterproof," but with a capitalist edge, since whoever says it doesn't just want you to be miserable, they want you to be miserable and the people who make wet-weather kit to be rich.

But I fell for it, and spent a fortune on a breathable waterproof jacket that was acknowledged to be the best of its type. And it was indeed a superb jacket. It kept me dry, there was hardly a leak round neck or wrists, and I was barely any sweatier than I'd have been



wearing a couple of layers on a dry day.

All that happened was that I realised it wasn't the wetness per se that I hated, it was the water on my face, the drops on my glasses, the slippery roads, the water gradually soaking my tights from the ankles upwards, the lack of visibility, the spray every time a van drove past, even the smell of wet road. With the addition of the jacket I also had

Acts of Cycling Stupidity

Not long ago, my 80-year-old father took his hybrid bike to a local shop (part of a large chain) for a service, and for replacement mudguards. When he collected it, the permanent full-length mudguards had been replaced with some short mtb clip-on guards, of the sort that clamp to the seatpin and zip-tie round the down tube.

"The mud clearance is better for singletrack and stuff like that," said the lazy-arse of a mechanic to my elderly bearded father.

He got sent back to do the job properly. All I'll say is that having tried to sneak one or two lame efforts past my father over the years, I know just how he felt.



“I will not ride in the rain, except by accident or for money”

the incessant noise of rain bouncing off it, so all I'd done was make the experience even worse.

So I decided to give up trying. I

ride a bike for pleasure. There is no pleasure, for me, in riding in the rain. Therefore I will not do it, except by accident or for money. And I'm not going to be pressurised into it by someone who's clearly half-frog or takes some sort of pleasure in getting a road-grit enema from the spray off his back wheel.

Five-hour turbo-trainer ride? Don't mind if I do. It's better than the rain.

GREAT INVENTIONS OF CYCLING

Power-to-weight ratio

The power-to-weight ratio is one of the most flexible and subtle concepts in cycling. There is almost no aspect of riding a bike that it can't in some way spoil, at least a little bit.

It is, of course, simply a rider's power divided by the rider's weight, usually expressed as watts per kilo. But feel free to use foot-pounds per minute per pound if you fancy a little simple maths.

Its most frequent use is as a method of telling people they're fat, but doing it in such a way that they can't object. As in, “I think you probably need to focus on your power-to-weight ratio if you want to get better results this year.”

In case you're thinking that maybe anyone who tells you this is envisaging you working solely on your power, well, just remember that if that was what they'd meant they wouldn't have dragged your weight into the conversation in the first place.

A second use is as an excuse to spend money. As in, “I need to upgrade my bike — it will improve the power-to-weight of my whole set-up.” This creates a handy smokescreen to avoid having to explain why you'd rather spend £1,000 on some carbon knick-knacks than forgo a slice of cake with your morning coffee for a fortnight.

Finally, power-to-weight ratios of professional riders are a surefire way to detect doping. Just time them up a climb when you're watching on TV, look up how big the climb is in your AA Road Atlas of Europe, guess the rider's weight, and you can be one jump ahead of the dope testers.

Power-to-weight is a question of balance





The Koppenberg

It's one of the toughest cobbled climbs in Flanders, a place where cobbled climbs are legion — but this one is special, says *Chris Sidwells*

There's no real run-up to the Koppenberg. A 90-degree corner in Melden, the village at its foot, drops Tour of Flanders riders to a crawl. The gradient almost immediately rises out of it on cobbles. Then you hit the climb proper, and it's brutal. It goes from 12 to 20 per cent in the first 200 metres. And there are still 400 metres to go.

In the past, the only place to ride was in the gutters, because when the Koppenberg first entered cycling its head-sized cobblestones were as rough as a mouthful of broken teeth. If the gutters were blocked riders would try the cobbles, but the camber was so great they had to be cycling gymnasts to make progress. Any kind of surface moisture caused chaos.

In its first appearance in the Tour of Flanders, in 1976, there was mayhem. The first four got up OK, then rider five spun his wheels and the rest stumbled into him. Ten places back the great Eddy Merckx had to get off his bike and walk. Few hills have a scalp like that.

The Koppenberg played a huge part in the Tour of Flanders. Some suggested it unfairly affected the race, and that the surface was dangerous. They were vindicated in 1987 when Jesper Skibby led the race, slipped and fell on the Koppenberg, and the car following him ran over his bike. It nearly ran over him.

Resurfaced and reintroduced

The hill was taken out of the race and spent 15 years in the wilderness until a

new, €250,000 surface of Italian cobblestones was laid and the road was widened in 2001. This changed the Koppenberg but it was still a tough challenge. Even now riding up the centre of the road requires a tip-toe application of power, plus the sixth sense of a guided missile to reach the top without stopping.

And stopping is a grim reality for many. Not only do riders depend on their own skill and power on the Koppenberg, they hope that those around them won't run out of steam. Slip and you are off, get baulked and you are off, stop and you are off, and the final 200 metres are a trot if one can be mustered, or a grim trudge if it can't.

The last part of the climb eases to 13 and then to 11 per cent. Then there's a short section of flat and a snaking descent back down to the main road. The Koppenberg is done; 600 metres of cobbles with an average gradient of 11.6 per cent, 64 metres of height gain, and a huge place in cycling history.



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